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Aging, Generations, and the Development of Partisan Polarization in the United States

Abstract

In this paper we address the topic of increasing partisan polarization in the American mass public, focusing on the twin influences of individual level development and cohort replacement and the interaction between the two. We posit a model of individual development that consists of declining openness to change beyond young adulthood, an increase in party-issue constraint as age advances, and cohort-specific responsiveness to changes in the partisan environment. Results from a long-term panel study provide initial evidence of these dynamics. We then use simulations to generate expectations about how these developmental processes play out across cohorts, across issues, and across time. These expectations are evaluated through a cohort analysis of National Election Studies data from 1972-2004. Overall, our results provide a new perspective on the dynamics of individual political development and on the timing, extent, and future trajectory of partisan polarization in the mass public.

Aging, Generations, and the Development of Partisan Polarization in the United States

Introduction

A longstanding subject of inquiry in the public opinion and electoral behavior fields involves the connection between party identification and issue stances. This connection has acquired new relevance in light of the increasing attention being devoted to issue-based party polarization. Work is proliferating on polarization in Congress (e.g., Brady and Han 2004, Poole and Rosenthal 1984, Theriault 2005), in the mass public (e.g., Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, Dimaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996, Fiorina 2005, Fleisher and Bond 2001), and on the connection between the two (e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989, Jacobson 2000, Layman and Carsey 2002, Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani 2003). Scholars largely agree that the American public has not become more polarized in the sense of being more divided ideologically, or in the sense that citizens hold more divergent views on major policy issues—which Fiorina (2005) labels “popular polarization.” Rather, it is partisan polarization in the electorate that has been on the rise: Democrats and Republicans in the electorate have become increasingly divided ideologically and the issue opinion differences between them have been widening.

One of the most widely accepted propositions in this literature is that elite partisan polarization has fueled this mass partisan polarization. An early version of this proposition was developed by Carmines and Stimson (1986, 1989) in their theory of issue evolution. As they put it, “visible changes in elite behavior serve to redefine party images, to affect emotional response to the parties, and ultimately to realign the constellation of voter issue attitudes and party identifications” (Carmines and Stimson 1986, p. 904). In the issue evolution framework, generational replacement was deemed to be the primary engine of change. Once racial issues divided the parties in the mid 1960s, racial opinions began to shape the partisan choices of young adults subsequently entering the electorate. The partisan affiliations of older Americans, securely formed in a pre-civil rights era, remained relatively stable in the face of the changing partisan environment. The racial reorganization of partisan identification was, therefore, a slow-moving phenomenon largely fed by population replacement.

This perspective on how public opinion responds to new party differences assumes that partisan affiliations are firmly held once acquired. A second perspective places more emphasis on the possibility of individual-level change, viewing partisan affiliations as malleable in the face of new events and partisan alignments. Levendusky (2004), for example, develops a model of individual-level partisan change based on the idea that “as elites become ideologically more distinct, voters can more easily choose a party ID concordant with their views, and as a consequence, voters have become much better sorted into political parties” (p. 2). A striking example of that occurred in the Southern states, where individual-level partisan change ostensibly prompted by racial considerations appears to have been substantial since the mid-1960s (Green, Palmquist, and Schlickler 2002, ch. 6).

Of course, even if party identification is stable once acquired, individuals may respond to the new partisan environment by bringing their issue attitudes more in line with their partisanship. Observing the new divide between the parties, partisans may increasingly adopt the issue position associated with their own party, eschewing that of its competitor. Individual-level change is again the engine of an increasing issue-based divide among Democrats and Republicans in the electorate, but in this case it is stable partisans increasingly coming to embrace the issue stances that their preferred party advocates.

In short, as the parties increasingly stake out distinctive ideological and issue-based positions, partisan polarization in the public should follow, either as new entrants to the polity reflect the new partisan alignment more so than do those exiting, or as individuals themselves respond by changing their partisan affiliations and/or issue attitudes to bring them into greater alignment, or both.

However sensible these ideas about the dynamics of partisan polarization may be, they have been subject to surprisingly little close examination. Our goal in this paper is to do just that, bringing a political socialization perspective to the question. We begin by offering and evaluating the evidence for two general propositions for how people develop politically. The first one holds that attitudinal stability increases with age. Although generally accepted, this proposition has multiple variants and has rarely

been subjected to the scrutiny of long-term panel data. The second proposition holds that, in a context of reasonably stable issue cleavages between the parties, the constraint between partisan affiliation and issue positions increases with age. Unlike the first proposition, this one represents a distinctly new developmental perspective on the partisanship/attitude nexus. We use panel data from the long-term political socialization project to generate support for these ideas and to expand upon them.

We next consider how party-issue constraint develops across the life cycle when partisan issue cleavages are also changing. This consideration introduces the possibility of cohort-specific developmental processes because citizens will be at varying points in their life cycle when changes in the partisan environment occur. To represent these dynamics, we simulate how party-issue constraint differs over time and across cohorts under three different partisan environments: (1) where party differences are constant across the entire period (70 years) of our simulation, (2) where party differences emerge midway through the period and are stable, subsequently, and (3) where party differences again emerge midway through the period but the differences continue to grow over time. Taken together, these simulations illuminate how developmental processes and generational differences work to shape partisan polarization in the electorate. They also set forth expectations that are met when tested against replicated cross-section data from the National Election Studies (NES).

Overall, we provide a new understanding of socialization dynamics at the individual level and of partisan polarization at the aggregate level, wrought by tying these two topics together. In terms of socialization, we join extant ideas about age-related gains in attitude crystallization with new ideas about age-related, yet frequently cohort-specific, gains in party-issue constraint. Regarding the development of partisan polarization, we address both individual-level and generational replacement dynamics, while also illuminating the crucial interaction between the two. Through approaches and evidence that consider both the micro- and the macro-level mechanisms fueling issue-based differences between Democrats and Republicans in the electorate, we offer new insights into how partisan polarization varies across time, generations, and issues.

Methodology

In order to demonstrate the individual-level dynamics of attitudinal stability and the connection between partisanship and attitudes we draw upon the longitudinal political socialization project (ICPSR studies #4023 and #9553), which had its origins in the spring of 1965 with a national survey of 1669 high school seniors and their parents (Jennings and Niemi 1974). Subsequent surveys of both generations were conducted in 1973 and 1982, and a fourth survey of the younger generation occurred in 1997. We utilize both generations but concentrate more on the younger one because it was initially captured on the verge of adulthood when many political orientations were weakly grounded. The raw, unadjusted retention rate from the original pool of respondents is 56% for the four-wave youth panel, which stretched over thirty-two years, and 57% for the parent sample, which spanned seventeen years. Previous analyses of the youth sample (Jennings and Niemi 1981, Appendix A, Jennings and Markus 1984) and more recent ones reveal only minor differences from wave to wave of those who dropped out compared with those who remained in the panel.¹

An analysis of these two samples should keep in mind their socio-economic bias in that high school drop-outs (around one-fourth in 1965) and their parents are not included. There is little reason, however, to think that the broad outlines of our findings would differ with their inclusion. The life history and political history of the youth sample also bear comment. In terms of life history, the class of 1965 has aged from around 18 to 50 years of age and has undergone a great variety of the changes that typically accompany the aging process. They have also had ample time to interact with the political

¹ The crucial comparisons are between the 935 four-wave panel respondents and the 734 respondents surveyed in the 1965 study but not included in all of the post-1965 waves. These comparisons reveal that the four-wave panelists as of 1965 had slightly higher levels of political involvement, expressed higher interest in politics, followed politics more frequently in the newspapers, and had more factual knowledge about politics. Attitudinally, the panelists tended to be slightly more liberal. However, panel vs. non-panel status never accounts for over 2% of the variance in scores on the explicitly political measures.

world. In terms of political history, the class of 1965 was ushered into adulthood during the turmoil surrounding the Vietnam War and political assassinations, and the sweeping social changes signaled by the civil rights and women's rights movements. Subsequent events included the Watergate scandal and President Nixon's resignation followed by such nationally absorbing events as the oil crisis, economic recession, the eight-year reign of Ronald Reagan, the Iran-Contra affair, and the Gulf War.

These characteristics of the sample raise the possibility of cohort-centric effects that threaten generalizability. To some degree the presence of the parent panel component of the project lessens the cohort-centric problem. Then, too, the project has a decided advantage over the two NES panels in terms of its long-term nature, and over the Bennington (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991) and Terman gifted children studies (Sears and Funk 1999) in terms of its national scope and heterogeneous sample. More importantly, as we shall argue, cohort-centric phenomena are crucial in understanding the evolving nature of the ties between partisanship and issues.

While the socialization panel data enable us to test propositions about the strengthening of political attitudes and the relationship between these attitudes and partisanship as individuals age, they cannot capture the emergence and evolution of partisanship/issue ties across multiple cohorts coming of age under different configurations of issue-based party cleavages. Rather, what is required is longitudinal data based on replicated measures and covering a lengthy period of time. Consequently, in the last analytic section of the paper we use data from the NES series stretching from 1972 to 2004.

The Stability of Political Affiliations and Attitudes

Two models of stability over the life span appear to characterize a sizeable number of political attitudes (Alwin 1993, 1994; Sears 1983). The impressionable years model posits considerable fluctuations during the late adolescent and young adult years, followed by a period of crystallization that more or less holds throughout the rest of the life cycle. The mid-life stability model is similar except that it is curvilinear and predicts a tapering off of stability in the years well beyond mid-life. Both models rest on the belief that repeated trials with the political environment and the development of "affective

mass" with respect to affiliations and attitudes lead to increased stability by middle age (Sears 1981). Because the 1965 high school seniors had not yet reached the latter stages of life as of the 1997 observations, neither model can be fully tested on them, but some leverage can be gained by using the earlier waves of the parent panel.

We have observations for the youth sample across all four waves for several measures and across three waves for others, thus permitting us to look at the patterns of persistence up to their mid-century mark. In addition we have three and two-wave data for the parent sample, which—due to its age heterogeneity—has been divided into two approximately equal subsets of older and younger cohorts for analytic purposes. Table 1 presents the continuity coefficients (r) for eleven commonly-used attitudinal measures.² (See Appendix for details concerning the measures.) The correlations indicate attitudinal continuity across adjacent years of observation. In order to convey a sense of life stage progression the age range has been affixed to each panel's calendar time, with the parental range being expressed in terms of mean age.

For the younger generation, the stabilities climb markedly between the first and second time frames on the five available measures. Modest attitudinal continuity, at best, is evident as these youth aged from 18 to 26, whereas continuity was much more pronounced over the next decade, a trend found for a number of other orientations as well (Jennings and Markus 1984).³ Across the third time frame—as the youth aged from 35-50—these gains tend to remain very much in place, a particularly arresting fact given the much longer time span represented by that third period. Significantly, the eleven measures range widely in terms of attitude objects, question format, and the political vicissitudes that have

² These continuity coefficients are not adjusted for measurement error. Adjustments for measurement error are not likely to alter the patterns of development over time but are likely to influence the pattern of stability across issues (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991).

³ Similar patterns can be inferred from a national two wave panel covering the 1974-81 period (Jennings 1990).

accompanied the phenomena reflected by these measures since 1965. Notwithstanding these plentiful variations, strong similarity marks the developmental patterns. This similarity is not to deny the likelihood of interaction effects involving life stage, political history, and the stability of particular attitudes (Sears and Funk 1999, Sears and Valentino 1997).

These results fit neatly within either the impressionable years or mid-life stability models, but leave unresolved a choice between the two due to the cohort's having only reached age 50. Drawing on the parent panels from the same project sheds light on the topic. One surely runs all kinds of risks in a splicing of the youth and parent cohorts, but the exercise is instructive and the results to be reported are similar to those based on highly specialized populations (Alwin, et al. 1991 and Sears and Funk 1999), though departing somewhat from those based on synthetic cohorts derived from the short-term NES panel studies in the 1950s and 1970s (Alwin 1994).

The gains posted by the younger parents across the two panel periods on four of the five measures first used in 1965 are, predictably, not nearly as sharp as those registered by the youth cohort during the same time frame, but they do show incremental growths in stability well into middle age and point toward a plateauing effect in the middle to late middle years. Older parents experienced very small shifts in both directions on these measures and provide no clear-cut support for a curvilinear continuity pattern. On the other hand their stability levels on eight of the eleven measures available in the second panel frame run somewhat lower than those of the younger parents during the same time frame, suggesting the tailing off effect predicted by the mid-life stability model. Overall, however, the movements in the two parental cohorts fall far below those generated by the youth cohort in its first panel period. Thus the impressionable years model is far more satisfactory.

Two trends contained in Table 1 seem contrary, at first glance, to this conclusion. They also have a bearing on arguments and findings to be presented in a later section. Stability proved to be much higher in the youth than in the parent sample in regard to evaluation of the women's liberation movement, opinions about the legalization of marijuana, and to a lesser extent, attitudes towards blacks.

These topics concern salient issues emerging as the class of 1965 came of political age. Political identities could form around such issues. By contrast, the issues hit the parent cohorts when they were already well into middle age and found themselves trying to graft these issues on to previous identities. These results are, therefore, fully compatible with the impressionable years model.

A second pattern in Table 1 is incompatible with both the mid-life stability and impressionable years model. Although party identification stability does increase markedly in the youth sample from the first to the second panel periods, stability continues to climb in the parent sample and is substantially and universally higher than in the youth sample. Two explanations could account for this exceptionalism. A generational accounting points toward party ties as simply being weaker in the cohorts coming of age after 1964, including the rise and continuation of self-declared Independents (e.g., Miller and Shanks 1996, ch. 6; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rhode 2003, ch. 8). By this view, the class of 1965 will never reach the levels of its lineage predecessor. A life cycle explanation, however, allows for even greater strengthening of partisanship well after mid-life due to the unique features of partisanship as a concrete, frequently reinforced orientation with high affective mass. The movement from .75 in the younger parents in the first panel period to .85 among the older parents in the second panel period supports this hypothesis. Perhaps the youth cohort will never equal its genealogical predecessor in its partisan stability, but the odds are good that it will exceed the .65 registered in its third panel period.⁴

The Linkage of Issue Positions and Party Identification

We have established that political attachments and attitudes become more stable after the early adult brushes with the political world. To advance our understanding of how polarization can set in, we need to determine if the growing stability of partisanship and attitudes is matched by a strengthening of

⁴ Another seeming anomaly rests in the considerably higher stability of the older compared with younger parents in the second panel period on the issue of equality for women. A plausible explanation is that as a relatively new issue, the younger parents were more likely to have their views altered. Older women proved to be especially recalcitrant, i.e., were more stable from 1973 to 1982.

the linkage between the two. Nuanced treatments of the linkage between partisanship and issue positions recognize the importance of beginning points in early adulthood, an emergent crystallization with respect to party identification and at least some types of issues (as witnessed above), and periodic updating of both party identification and issue positions (e.g., Abramowitz 1998, Carmines and Stimson 1989, Niemi and Jennings 1991). Panel data are especially well suited to addressing such phenomena.

As discussed earlier, we expect that, in an unchanging partisan environment, people increasingly come to understand the issue positions differentiating the parties as they age, and respond by bringing their policy views and partisan affiliation into greater alignment. In so doing, they would either come to adopt the policy views advocated by the party with which they identify, or adjust their partisan affiliation to be consistent with their issue commitments, or both. This would be true regardless of the specific learning mechanism involved—if, for example, political experience brings about a clearer sense of the parties' issue stances, which then drives the enhanced tie between attitudes and partisanship (e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989, Achen 1992), or if political experience enhances the frequency with which political attitudes become primed, which then generates the tighter bond (e.g., Sears and Funk 1999). We also expect these adjustments to be more pronounced following on the heels of the “impressionable years” of young adulthood. This expectation of non-linearity of the growth in party-issue constraint is tied to the non-linearity of growth in opinion stability. As partisan and issue attitudes become more crystallized, they should be less subject to the adjustment that builds constraint.

One test of this hypothesis consists of using the panel data to observe the associations between a variety of political attitudes and party identification across time. We restrict the analysis to the youth sample in order to take advantage of a fuller range of the life cycle and developments between the early 1980s and late 1990s. Table 2 presents the findings for respondents, gauged in terms of Pearson correlation coefficients.⁵ For the most part, the expected strengthening does occur with the passage of

⁵ Pearson correlations have the advantage of being symmetric statistics, which make no assumption of causal direction. They have the disadvantage, however, of being sensitive to the variables' marginal

time. Relationships for all but one indicator (evaluation of blacks) are demonstrably higher in 1997—usually by a very hefty margin—than are those in 1965 and 1973. Especially striking is the dramatic increase with respect to ideological identification, where partisans increasingly align themselves with where they “should be” on the liberal-conservative continuum. Overall, these results underscore the importance of sheer adult-level interaction with the political system. People experience more politics, and thus make more sense of politics, as they age. That the pattern across the years is not always monotonic suggests the contribution of short-term period effects, most pointedly so in the case of the school integration issue, which has waxed and waned as a salient partisan issue.

Of course, another possibility is that the class of 1965 was merely responding to push-pull forces that were affecting all cohorts passing through the same historical time. (There is, in fact, a hint of that in the more limited parent panel.) In this scenario partisan divisions on these issues have become more pronounced or less uncertain since the 1960s. Researchers have found increased public awareness of party differences on racial issues in recent decades (Carmines and Stimson 1989) and of the parties' ideological differences in general (Abramowitz 1998). Undoubtedly, these kinds of changes in partisan cues have also contributed to the increased linkages we observe in Table 2. Thus we are left with two explanations of the observed increase in the partisan/issue linkage—political learning processes associated with aging and period effects associated with more distinctive partisan divisions. Only by analyzing longitudinal data for multiple cohorts over an extended period of time can we begin to distinguish between these two effects and, more critically, the interaction between them.

distributions, which can make cross-time or cross-group comparisons problematic. Bivariate regression coefficients, on the other hand, require an assignment of causal direction but are not sensitive to the variables' marginal distributions. The results shown are, nonetheless, very similar to those found using regression analysis, whether treating party identification or issue attitude as the dependent variable.

Simulating Developmental and Generation Effects in Party-Issue Constraint

We have shown that in the Political Socialization Study's youth sample the ties between party identification and political attitudes tended to strengthen with age, and have implied that this is a general process, one that is not specific to the class of 1965. We have also suggested that this kind of developmental process requires a relatively stable political configuration, stable in terms of the issue positions parties are staking out and the groups whose interests they are seeking to advance. This argument by no means rules out inter-cohort differences in terms of what particular attitudes become linked to partisanship or in how strongly the linkages form. Quite the contrary. As cohorts begin to make firmer their partisan allegiances and attitudinal dispositions, the particular linkages being forged between the two should vary with the societal forces at work at the time. How issues, groups, and parties become connected in a voter's mind should depend upon how they are aligned in the political environment that marks the voter's coming of age. As such, changes over time in the issues and problems that concern the nation and that become reflected in party agendas should generate inter-cohort differences in the alignment of partisan orientations with issue positions and group sympathies.

This leaves us with two ways in which age figures into the relationships that are formed between party identification and other political attitudes. One way views age as an index of political experience, as discussed above. The second way concerns age as an index of political generation. Because the linkages between policy and partisan attitudes begin to strengthen during the formative years of young adulthood, they should reflect the associations that were prominent in the political era during which the individual came of age.

To develop our ideas about how the evolution of party-issue constraint is altered by a changing partisan environment, and to work out the macro-level implications of this process, we built a very simple model that has three working parts, two of which are depicted in Figure 1. First, the model assumes that openness to change declines with age, non-linearly. This expectation is just a restatement of the impressionable years thesis regarding attitudinal stability. Second, in the face of a stable party

difference on an issue (e.g., Democrats take the liberal side of an issue and Republicans take the conservative side of an issue, and do so throughout one's life span), party-issue constraint will climb with age, non-linearly. The third working part of the model (not evident in Figure 1) concerns the existence and magnitude of party differences on political issues at any particular point in time. We simulated how party-issue constraint would change across time and across cohorts given varying assumptions about the nature of party differences on an issue. Specifically, we modeled constraint at time t as equal to constraint at time $t-1$ plus an increment that depended on the magnitude of the party difference in place and the individual's openness to change.⁶

The first scenario assumed a constant party difference on an issue over the entire time span being modeled—1930-2000. That is, the parties differed on an issue in 1930 and continued to differ, in the same way, on the issue across the next 70 years. A prime example would be the decades-long distinction of Democrats as being pro-labor and Republicans as pro-business.⁷ The entries found in Table 3 report simulated constraint levels given the proposition that constraint increases with age in the fashion described earlier. Each cohort shows the same, curvilinear maturation pattern as it ages (looking across rows), which is also found by comparing age cohorts at one moment in time (looking across columns).

⁶ Individuals who came of age when the party difference was already intact were modeled as growing in constraint by the amount indicated in Figure 1. For individuals who came of age prior to the emergence of the party difference (and hence whose openness was already lowered by the time the party difference emerged) the growth in constraint was discounted by their level of openness. Constraint levels were also adjusted for the magnitude of the party difference, which varies over time in two of the simulations.

⁷ When we refer to “party differences” mean the distinctive positions taken by the Democrat versus the Republican parties as organizations and as indicated by elite party representatives. We set aside important questions in our treatment, here, including heterogeneity among those conveying the party's position to the electorate and the relative importance of cues sent via elections versus the actions of Congress or the President—issues we return to in the conclusion, however.

No “generational effect” is evident (looking across the diagonals). Overall, the extent of the party cleavage, indexed by the average constraint coefficient (see bottom row), is constant over time.⁸

The second, more dynamic simulation stipulated that the parties took similar positions on the issue until 1970, at which point a party difference emerged (Table 4). One can think of this as representing, for example, the emergence of a party division on racial issues, with the Democrats being more liberal and the Republicans more conservative on policies aimed at promoting racial equality. Several aspects of the simulation findings deserve emphasis.

First, the older cohorts are less responsive, less open to change than are the younger cohorts. Compare, for example, the changes across 1970 to 2000 for the 1930 cohort (.24 - .26) and the 1970 cohort (.32 - .63). These contrasts appear because the policy and partisan attitudes of the older cohort are more crystallized than those of the younger cohort as of the moment the new party difference emerges. Their attitudes are not as likely to readjust to reflect the new partisan alignment.

Second, the cohort differences grow over time. Initially, cohort differences are inconsequential, with constraint levels ranging from .24 to .33 in 1970. By 2000, however, constraint varies from .26 to .63 and a pronounced curvilinear pattern emerges. The highest level of constraint occurs in the 1970 cohort, which was just coming of age when the new party difference emerged. Constraint drops off among both older and younger cohorts, though for different reasons. Compared with the older ones, the 1970s cohort was more open to change across the 1970-2000 period, which generated higher levels of constraint for this group by 2000. Compared with younger cohorts, the 1970s cohort has had more experience with the political system, more time to develop constraint; the younger cohorts are simply behind,

⁸ In these simulations what matters is the patterning of constraint levels across cohort and across time, not their absolute levels, which are arbitrary. The overall cleavage is calculated by assuming equal cohort sizes, and takes into account cohorts not showing up in the tables in the years prior to 2000.

developmentally. Consequently, it is the interaction of life cycle, developmental process and a new political environment that—ultimately—produces a distinctive “70s generation.”

In this simulation the party difference emerges in 1970 and is stable subsequently. Nevertheless, the population continues to polarize on the issue. Constraint grows, on average, from .27 in 1970 to .42 in 2000. This increased polarization comes about for three reasons. First, it reflects the operation of developmental processes, as people slowly adjust to the new political reality by modifying their issue attitudes and/or partisan affiliations. Second, it reflects the process of population replacement in that new entrants to the polity evidence more constraint than do those who are exiting (compare bottom row in a given column with top row in the previous column).

Third, and most interestingly, the heightened polarization reflects the interaction between generation formation and developmental processes. At first, new entrants look hardly more polarized than those exiting. But the polity is losing people who do not develop and is replacing them with people who do develop as they age. As a result, cohort differences grow over time (compare the diagonal entries as one moves toward the upper right of the table). In effect, the population replacement engine produces effects that are increasingly felt as the developmental process plays itself out. Overall polarization in the electorate and the large cohort differences in place by 2000 are the delayed consequence of an event taking place thirty years earlier, an event whose full consequences will not be felt until well after the pre-1970s cohorts are fully replaced.

In the final simulation, the party difference emerges in 1970 and continues to expand subsequently. One can think of this increasing polarization in several, complementary ways. First, the parties might be becoming more divided on the issue, understood spatially, with Democrats more liberal and Republicans more conservative. Second, uncertainty about party differences on the issue might be declining as cues and information about the party difference accumulate. Third, the emphasis or salience

of party differences on the issue may be growing.

The patterns found in this case (Table 5) are similar to those seen in table 4, with four significant differences. First, constraint grows more rapidly over time within each cohort (e.g., change from .24 to .33 for the 1930 cohort vs. .24 to .26 in Table 4, or .32 to .82 for the 1970 cohort vs. .32 to .63 previously). Second, constraint develops even more quickly for new cohorts facing a highly polarized partisan environment than for those facing a moderately polarized partisan environment. Constraint levels for new entrants range from .32 for the 1970 cohort to .35, .39, and .42 for the cohorts of 1980, 1990, and 2000; and during their first decade as adults, constraint rises by .21 (.53-.32) for the 1970 cohort, which is exceeded by the 1980 cohort (.23) and then again by the 1990 cohort (.25). Third, and as a consequence, enhanced cross-sectional cohort differences appear, especially as time passes. For example, the gap between the 1930 and 1970 cohorts by 2000 is .49 in Table 5, compared to .37 in Table 4. Finally, the overall party cleavage grows at a faster rate than seen in the previous simulation, and by 2000 is larger, as increased party polarization accelerates the development of constraint and accentuates the constraint gap between new entrants relative to those exiting.

Testing the Models in the Electorate

Data from NES are in many respects ideally suited for testing these simulation models due to the embedded cohort heterogeneity and to the presence of at least a few attitudinal measures that overlap with those from the socialization study. We analyzed NES data on ten issues between 1972 and 2004. Issues were categorized into three groups. The first includes issues on which it is reasonable to view the parties as differentiated throughout the entire period under study. Include here are attitudes toward labor unions (where Democrats are more pro-labor than are Republicans), attitudes toward government provision of social services to the poor or disadvantaged (which the Democrats support more than do the Republicans), and attitudes toward the size of government—essentially, whether the federal government should have a large or limited regulatory role (where the Democrats favor a larger role than do the Republicans). Attitudes on these longstanding issues were combined into a cumulative index we refer to

as “New Deal Issues” index. The second group includes issues involving racial and gender equality where the parties began to differentiate themselves in the 1960s (e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989, ch. 3, Legee, Wald, Krueger, and Mueller 2002, chs. 9, 11). Responses to these questions were combined to form a “Race & Gender Issues” index. The third group includes attitudes on cultural and moral issues, where party differences began to become more pronounced in the late 1970s and subsequently (e.g., Legee et al. 2002, chs. 8, 11, Layman 2001, Lindeman and Haider-Markel 2002, Miller and Jennings 1986, ch. 8). The “Cultural Issues” index contains attitudes on abortion, gay rights, and—to index religiosity—church attendance, as well as a general indicator of support for traditional family values.⁹

In order to have sufficient cases for the cohort analysis, NES data from eight presidential election year studies were combined into pairs: 1972-1976, 1980-1984, 1988-1992, and 1996-2000. Rather than exclude 2004 or treat it separately—which is problematic given the dwindling sample sizes for the various cohorts we analyze—we decided to include 2004 along with the 1996 and 2000 surveys. We begin with 1972 because the earlier NES studies did not contain the instrumentation that was carried over the 1972-2000 period.

Table 6 shows the constraint levels for the twelve issues, the three indexes, and the lib-con self-location measure over time for the full sample of available cases. First consider the comparison across items. The constraint correlations for the “New Deal Issues” are substantially higher than those found for issues concerning race and gender, which themselves are higher than those found for cultural issues. As of the initial sounding (1972-1976) these are .31, .14, and -.03 for the three indices, respectively, and as of the latest sounding (1996-2000) they are .50, .38, and .24. These differences are to be expected if, as we have suggested, party differences were late arrivals for race and gender issues and even later, still, for those concerned with cultural and moral matters.

⁹ Although we tried to construct indices with similar levels of reliability, the New Deal Issues index comes out slightly ahead, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .66 (using all available data, over time and cohort), followed by .57 for the Cultural Issues Index and .53 for the Race & Gender Issues Index.

Turning to the longitudinal comparisons, we see that constraint levels are indeed climbing across the period, nearly always monotonically. The fact that this is true on the longstanding “New Deal Issues” suggests that the parties have become increasingly differentiated even on these issues over the past four decades, despite the fact that party differences were already in place by the 1960s. The cohort-specific results will provide more persuasive evidence that this is the case.¹⁰

Cohorts were distinguished by the presidential election in which they first became eligible to vote. Those who were eligible to vote in elections before 1964 are designated “Came of age before 1964.” Those first eligible to vote in 1964 or 1968 were designated “Came of age: 1964-1968.” Using this same system we designated cohorts who “came of age” during the other sets of elections as well: 1972-1976, 1980-1984, 1988-1992, and 1996-2004.¹¹ We examine constraint levels using the three indexes across cohorts and over time. Given our arguments, the results for the “New Deal Issues” index should mirror those found in the first simulation of no change in party polarization. Patterns for the “Race & Gender Issues” index should mirror those found for the second or third simulation, depending upon whether party differences on these issues have been static or increasingly accentuated over the period. Finally, those for the “Cultural Issues” index should show the same pattern as the second/third

¹⁰ Both the New Deal Index and the Cultural Issues Index are made up of fewer items in the 1972-1984 period (two) than in the 1988-2004 period (four). This raises the possibility that over-time increases in constraint are tied to increases in the reliability of the indices. The fact that the same pattern is found for the individual items that comprise each index renders this potential confound less worrisome.

¹¹ Strictly speaking, we defined cohorts by whether they were 21 as of a given election year both before and after the age of eligibility was changed from 21 to 18. The first cohort turned 21 before 1964 (born 1942 or earlier), the second turned 21 between 1964 and 1971 (born 1943-1950), the third turned 21 between 1972 and 1979 (born 1951-1958), the fourth turned 21 between 1980 and 1987 (born 1959-1966), the fifth turned 21 between 1988 and 1995 (born 1967 - 1974), the sixth turned 21 in 1996 or later (born 1975 onward).

simulation, but with everything delayed by a decade due to the later emergence of the party differences.¹²

Table 7 contains the results. On the New Deal issues, some growth in constraint is found for all cohorts, evidence in support of the idea that the parties have increasingly distinguished themselves even on these longstanding issues since the early 1970s, with an especially noticeable boost during the Reagan years. Comparisons across cohorts (along the diagonal) support this conclusion as well. The cohorts entering the electorate in 1996-2004 show much higher levels of constraint (.38) than did those entering previously: .28, .24, and .17, respectively.

At the same time, and even more importantly, our expectations regarding cohort differences in development, based on the steady state model of simulation one, are largely met. Growth in constraint across the entire period is less for the oldest cohort (.22=.54-.32) than the two immediately younger ones (growths of .38 and .33, respectively). Comparing the last pairs of elections, new entrants gain the most (.14 =.42-.28), and the gain diminishes among older cohorts (.08, .05, .05, and .09, respectively).

Moreover, gains in early adulthood usually exceed those in later adulthood. For the 1972-1976 cohort, for example, constraint rises first by .22 (.39 - .17) and then by .06 (.45 - .39). For the 1980-1984 cohort, the gains are .19 and then .14. Finally, the cross-sectional expectations are also met. Constraint levels are generally highest among oldest cohorts and decline near-monotonically across younger cohorts. In 1972-1976, for example, constraint levels range from .32 (oldest) to .18 to .17 (youngest), whereas in 1996-2004 they range from .54 (oldest) to .38 (youngest).

All in all, these results demonstrate that individuals do, indeed, develop greater consistency between their partisan affiliation and their issue commitment as they age, with the greatest gains usually coming in early adulthood. They also suggest that party differences on these longstanding issues have been growing, in contrast to the steady state modeled in simulation one. People have responded to these

¹² Although analyzing the individual items rather than indices may have been ideal, when doing so the amount of information quickly becomes overwhelming. Patterns found for the indices generally hold for the component variables. The full set of results is available at [website].

changes in the political environment by developing a tighter alliance between their partisan affiliations and their opinions on New Deal issues. At the same time, incoming cohorts over the past three decades have entered the electorate with their party affiliations increasingly aligned to their views on these issues long dividing the parties—sympathies for the working classes, the role of government in regulating the economy, and government assistance for the disadvantaged. Both individual-level change and generational differences are at work in producing greater partisan polarization on these issues in the electorate writ large.¹³

The pattern changes when we turn to race and gender issues, where party divergence came in the 1960s and early 1970s (second panel of Table 7). As with our second simulation, cohort differences are initially minimal, as the 1972-1976 column shows, but eventually become pronounced and assume a curvilinear shape. Constraint levels are lower among the cohorts coming of age prior to the 1960s than among those entering the electorate later. At no time point does constraint in the oldest cohort exceed that for the younger cohorts. In the late 1980s and early 1990s constraint is highest in the generations coming of age in the late 60s and early 1970s (.42 and .37), and dampened among those both older (.25) and younger (.31). By the 1996-2004 sounding, constraint levels range from .38 to .42 for the younger cohorts compared with .30 for the oldest cohort.

In two respects the patterning for these issues is similar to that found for the New Deal issues. First, early adulthood again is the period where constraint gains are typically highest, precisely as one would expect if people make age-related gains in party-issue consistency in the fashion that we have proposed. Second, each succeeding cohort is entering the electorate with a closer alignment between their party affiliation and their views on race and gender issues, as would be expected if the party differences on these issues have been increasingly clear. As a consequence, by the last surveys the younger cohorts look very much like those who preceded them—all save the eldest cohort. The

¹³ Very similar results prevail when considering lib-con self-placement and another measure based on thermometer evaluations of conservatives and liberals.

advantage in constraint that age and political experience has brought to the generations coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s has been wiped out by the more vivid socialization into party differences that the youngest cohorts have experienced.¹⁴

The results are even more striking for the cultural issues index (bottom panel of Table 7). Here, constraint levels begin at near zero in 1972-1976 for all cohorts. They climb steadily across the period, but especially for the cohort coming of age in the mid-1970s. Both of the older cohorts lag behind, as do the younger cohorts, which is precisely what would be expected if the developmental processes we have discussed are at work across this period during which new party differences on cultural issues emerged. Younger individuals, in their early 20s, have not yet developed crystallized partisan or other political attitudes; they lack the degree of political experience that has helped the earlier cohorts forge tighter connections. By contrast, the eldest cohort has had plenty of political experience, in fact too much political experience with another political era, one where the partisan conflict over cultural issues was absent. Their political identities were well formed before these changes in the partisan landscape, leaving them with partisan affiliations that are relatively detached from the new issues on the political scene.

A second clear finding is one of increasing initial cohort differences. Each succeeding cohort entering the electorate shows higher constraint levels than the preceding, ranging from .01 for the 1972-1976 cohort, to .06, .18, and .29 for succeeding cohorts. This pattern would be expected if, as other evidence suggests, the parties have been increasingly distinguishing themselves on these issues relating

¹⁴ Although one might expect these results to vary depending on whether respondents lived in the South, an analyses looking at regional subgroups shows this not to be the case (not shown). This is consistent with the findings of others (e.g., Fleisher and Bond 2001) which show little to no regional variation in the overtime growth in the consistency between party affiliation and ideology or issue opinions. Valentino and Sears (2005), however, do find that only in the (old Confederate) South do “symbolic racism” attitudes become more tightly linked to party identification over time.

to sex and morality since the mid-1970s. As with issues regarding race and gender, this leaves the partisanship of the youngest cohort almost as strongly aligned with their views on cultural issues as other cohorts coming of age since the late 1970s. What they lack in terms of years of political experience they make up for in terms of the clarity of the party differences they perceive as they come of age.

Our explanation of the results in Table 7 stresses the consequences of processes occurring in the impressionable years of early adulthood, and the tendency of attitudes and identities crystallized early to be less malleable in the later years. Older Americans, socialized before the 1960s, tend to think of the Democratic party as aligned with labor, a large and active federal government, committed to providing assistance to the disadvantaged—more, certainly, than they were socialized to think of them as aligned with blacks, the women’s movement, or liberal positions on cultural issues—carried that connection forward over the decades and strengthened it along the way. Later on, they were less likely to integrate their partisan orientations and their attitudes on the new issues of the day, certainly less likely to do so than were younger Americans whose experience with the political system and political parties were full of partisan conflict on these new issues.

Still, events taking place well after the impressionable years do influence the relationship between issue stances and partisanship. Cohorts, such as the class of 1965, which came of age in the mid to late 1960s, show a dramatic over-time increase in the extent to which they link their political views on race, gender, and cultural values with their partisan affiliation because those issues both marked their coming-of-age and persisted on the political agenda, presenting clear—indeed, clearer—party differences. For the even newer generations, the same is true for cultural issues as well.

Another way of showing the dynamics involving issue positions and partisanship is to posit party identification as dependent upon issue stances. Even though the relationship is undoubtedly reciprocal, as noted above, making the unidirectional assumption provides a useful analytic strategy in that it will indicate the *relative* significance of each set of issues to the partisan affiliations of each cohort over time. This is key to understanding whether the basis of partisan conflict is expanding (Layman and Carson

2002) or instead shifting to emphasize issues newly dividing the parties at the expense of the old. Table 8 gives results from multivariate regressions treating party identification as the dependent variable and the three issue indices as independent variables. Standardized coefficients are given, along with R^2 values, for each cohort and time period. The results are organized to facilitate comparisons across cohorts.

The partisanship of Americans socialized before the 1960s, has been, and remains, primarily tied to their positions on New Deal issues that have long divided the parties. As seen in Table 8, at each time point the party identification of this cohort is more strongly likened to opinions on these issues than to opinions on race, gender, or cultural matters. Even more, the standardized coefficient has grown from .33 to .51 over the period, which is largely responsible for the increased R^2 (.11 to .31). Although opinions on race and gender issues have at time been associated with the partisanship of this group, their influence is weak and did not grow over time. Cultural issues do, however, show signs of growing influence. By the last period, the standardized coefficient is .11 and highly statistically significant.

For the other cohorts, the influence of New Deal issues is diminished vis a vis issues on which party divisions are of more recent origin. A useful, albeit crude way to see this is by comparing the coefficient on the New Deal Issues index to the sum of the coefficients for the indices concerning race and gender and culture. For the oldest cohort the ratio is 3.4 (.51 vs. .15) as of 1996-2004, and for each successive cohort this ratio is 2.6, 1.0, 1.3, .9, and .7. The results for the youngest cohort are particularly striking. Cultural issues are particularly definitive for this group, with a coefficient that nearly matches that found for the New Deal issues (.25 vs. .29).

Still, and consistent with Layman and Carson's (2002) ideas about conflict extension in the electorate, partisan alignment with New Deal issues is not disappearing or being replaced by partisan conflict on issues concerning race or gender or culture. It is true that the partisanship of younger cohorts is less tied to their views on these longstanding issues than it is for older cohorts—and this is true near monotonically at each point in time. But this lessening is the result of the developmental processes that lead those with less political experience to manifest less party-issue constraint than their seniors on

issues that have long divided the parties. The continuing and even increasing importance of the traditional party cleavage is manifest in the over-time increases in constraint on the New Deal issues that are evident within each cohort. Even more importantly, it is evident in the generational differences that have emerged: these issues are more important to the partisan affiliation of new entrants to the electorate today than they were to the new entrants of yesterday. Specifically, the coefficient of .29 marking the youngest generation's entrance compares to coefficients of .19, .20, and .16 for preceding ones.

What is happening, instead, is that the “new” issues of race, gender, and culture, taken together, are becoming increasingly important over time and across generation without supplanting traditional issue concerns. Correspondingly, the ability of our three issue indices to explain partisan affiliation—in a statistical sense—is growing across time and generation as well. Looking across time, the R^2 grows for each cohort but peaks for those who came of age in the late 1960s and early 1970s—those most open to revising their partisan and issue attitudes over the period and who have had the most time to do so. Looking across cohorts, the R^2 values for new entrants ranges from .06 for the 1970s cohort to .09, .18, and, finally, .27 for the most recent cohort. As new entrants face a political environment where the partisan differences are not only evident on more issues but also increasingly clear, partisan affiliations becoming increasingly aligned with, and perhaps influenced by, a diverse set of issue commitments.¹⁵

At the same time, it appears that the power of cultural issues in defining Americans' partisanship is beginning to outweigh that of issues concerning race and gender. In the 1970s and 1980s opinions on cultural issues were mostly disconnected from partisan affiliations, though attitudes concerning race and gender were seemingly influential. By the late 1980s and especially in the past decade, the pattern has reversed. For each cohort save one the connection between cultural issues has grown stronger and has come to outstrip the connection based on race and gender. Unless the political environment changes to diminish or cloud party differences on cultural issues, their ascendancy in defining the partisan cleavage in the electorate can only be expected to grow in the future—as the developmental processes we have

¹⁵ See Abamowitz and Saunders (1998) who make a similar point in their analysis of party and ideology.

identified have time to play out, and as new, impressionable generations enter the electorate replacing those for whom cultural issues have little bearing on their partisan affiliations.

Conclusion

One preoccupation of political socialization researchers is with the character of political development over the life cycle, which entails studying general age-related political maturation processes as well as the effects of life-cycle events. These inquiries are important for what they reveal about individuals, but they are especially important for what they imply for the nation. If people mature politically as they age in the fashion we have set forth—developing more crystallized attitudes and higher levels of party-issue constraint—this has implications for how party cleavages emerge over time. Changes in the positions taken by the political parties will, eventually, be reflected in the public, but only after many years and perhaps decades have past. Along the way, one will find strong and predictable age-related differences in the extent to which people align their partisan attachments and their issue commitments. The strongest alignment typically—though only eventually—will be found among those who came of age when the new party division emerged. This developmental result can, however, be eclipsed if party differences become increasingly accentuated over time, raising the constraint levels of young adults to levels that match or even exceed those of their politically experienced elders.

In our account, partisan polarization in the electorate is an outcome of changes in the partisan environment, a top-down, long-running process driven by the emergence and exacerbation of partisan divides at the elite level. We have treated the character of party divisions as given, exogenous and unexplained. Two problems with this treatment are prominent. First, we have black-boxed the question of what cues the public is (or is not) receiving about the nature of party differences. Are those cues sent primarily through election campaigns and the positions taken by major, national level candidate? Do they reflect the behavior of House and Senate partisans, conveyed through the ongoing stream of political news or the activities of interest groups (Gerrity, Wagner, and Carmines 2004)? Second, the simple top-down representation of the influence process is likely erroneous. It may be that partisan divisions at the

elite level are at least in part explained by those that emerge in the public. For example, once a partisan difference begins to appear in the public that may provide an incentive for Democratic and Republican candidates to further accentuate their differences or may work through electoral mechanisms to yield a more sharply polarized Congress (Brady and Han 2004, Ono 2004, Stonecash, Brewer and Mariani 2003). Our understanding of the mass-elite linkage in partisan polarization would be enhanced by a closer examination of these issues left unexplored in our work.

These problems aside, our arguments about the forces working to generate partisan polarization in the electorate are nonetheless more complex than those ordinarily posited in the literature. Rather than emphasizing either population replacement or individual-level change as the mechanism by which partisan polarization in the electorate emerges, we have brought the two arguments together. And it is not just that both are operating, though they are, but that they are also interacting. Over the past thirty to forty years, partisan polarization in the American public writ large has been driven by generational replacement as new entrants showed greater party-issue constraint than did those they replaced, by individual-level change as individuals who persisted within the electorate developed increasing constraint as they aged, and by the conjunction of these mechanisms—as the population has become increasingly made up of cohorts whose partisan and issue attitudes were open to the development of constraint over time. Beneath the clear over-time growth in ideological differences between Democrats and Republicans in the electorate is a dynamic process that varies across time, across issues, and across generations. There is no simple mapping from elite-level partisan cleavages to cleavages in the general public.

Another way in which our arguments depart from ordinary thinking about this topic concerns the character of the explanations we have provided. Our explanation for the emergence of partisan polarization in the electorate, and for the prominent variation across cohorts as of 1996-2004 (Tables 7, 8) is, in an important sense, historical. Explanations for over-time changes in an outcome (e.g., level of cohort distinctiveness, overall polarization levels) usually cite over-time changes in a causal variable (Haydu 1998). Scholars might, as such, try to explain the prominent cohort differences as of the 1996-

2004 period as prompted by something about the politics of this period that differentiated it from the politics of the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s. And they have, in fact, tended to draw connections between polarization at the elite and mass levels by examining how well elite polarization at time t predicts mass polarization at time $t+1$ (e.g., Adams 1997, Lineman and Haider-Markel 2002). According to our arguments, however, both efforts are misguided. Even if the parties had not intensified their differences since the 1960s and 1970s—as our evidence, indirectly, has suggested they in fact have—polarization in the electorate and sharp differences across cohorts as of the late 1990s and early 2000s would still have emerged as the delayed consequence of a single, historical event: the emergence of an elite-level party division some thirty or forty years before.

We have also suggested that the level of issue-based polarization on topics concerning race, gender and, especially, cultural matters is likely to increase in the coming decades as population replacement and developmental processes play out. The party affiliations of a large and growing group of American have become strongly linked with their opinions on those issues and will not easily be uncoupled, even if the issue landscape changes or existing party differences become obscured. Still, our simulations and arguments have not seriously considered the possibility that party differences on these issues will diminish rather than persist or grow in the future. A more complete understanding of the future of issue-based polarization in the American electorate requires taking this possibility into account.

Our ideas about the growth of partisan polarization have also employed very general propositions about how people develop over the life cycle. Attitudinal stability and crystallization tend to rise with age, we have argued, with the greatest gains coming in young adulthood. In a stable partisan environment, we have suggested, party-issue consistency tends to develop with age in a similar fashion. Yet if party differences emerge midway through the life cycle, when partisan and issue attitudes are quite crystallized, individuals are less likely to respond by adjusting their partisan or issue attitudes to reflect the new partisan alignment. These arguments about life-cycle development, though not deterministic, are almost certainly neglecting important developmental variations across individuals. Put another way, it is

almost certainly wrong to view these developmental processes as simply the inevitable consequence of aging per se. At the very least, an individual's level of political awareness and engagement also matters to how he or she develops politically. As we have demonstrated elsewhere (Jennings and Stoker 1999), though not taken into account in our arguments here, those whose entry into adulthood during the turbulent late 1960s and early 1970s was marked by political engagement emerged with a more crystallized and constrained set of political and partisan attitudes than did those who went through their "impressionable years" politically disengaged. Just as short-term responsiveness to elite cues depends upon one's level of political awareness (Zaller 1992), so too do the contours of development over the life cycle. A more complete understanding of the development of partisan cleavages in the electorate must take these and other developmental variations into account.

Table 1

Stability of Opinions over Time, by Generation

Panel Years (Age)	Youth Generation			Parent Generation			
	65-73 (18-26)	73-82 (26-35)	82-97 (35-50)	Younger		Older	
				65-73 (41-49)	73-82 (49-58)	65-73 (51-59)	73-82 (59-68)
Party Identification	.49	.65	.65	.75	.80	.81	.85
Ideological Identification	---	.45	.58	---	.58	---	.56
Evaluation of Labor Unions	.23	.49	.53	.51	.60	.56	.56
Government Job Assistance	---	.35	.40	---	.45	---	.36
Evaluation of Blacks	.33	.50	.47	.39	.49	.40	.40
School Integration	.17	.29	.36	.35	.35	.35	.27
Government Aid to Minorities	---	.41	.44	---	.40	---	.34
Evaluation of Women's Movement	---	.48	.50	---	.37	---	.37
Women's Role	---	.45	.45	---	.37	---	.51
Prayer in the School	.37	.59	.60	.48	.56	.48	.54
Legalization of Marijuana	---	.63	.60	---	.47	---	.39

Note: Entries are continuity correlations. The data come from the Four Wave Political Socialization Project. The Ns for each variable are held constant across time within cohorts. Age ranges for parent cohorts refer to mean ages.

Table 2
Constraint between Political Attitudes and Party Identification over Time

Youth Generation

Year (Age)	1965 (18)	1973 (26)	1982 (35)	1997 (50)
Ideological Identification	---	.39	.52	.64
Evaluation of Labor Unions	.22	.20	.35	.37
Government Job Assistance	--	.25	.35	.41
Government Aid to Blacks	--	.22	.28	.35
Evaluation of Blacks	.16	.13	.13	.13
School Integration	.14	.16	.28	.23
Evaluation of Women's Movement	--	.17	.27	.40
Women's Role	--	.14	.10	.21
Prayer in the School	.03	.12	.14	.26
Legalization of Marijuana	--	.18	.11	.23

Note: Entries are Pearson correlations between party identification and the variable named in the row. The data come from the Four Wave Political Socialization Project. The Ns for each variable are held constant across time.

Table 3
 Simulated Constraint between Political Attitudes and Party Identification
 Over Time and across Cohorts

I. Constant Party Difference

Came of Age:	Year							
	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
in 1930	.32	.48	.57	.63	.66	.68	.69	.69
in 1940	---	.32	.48	.57	.63	.66	.68	.69
in 1950	---	---	.32	.48	.57	.63	.66	.68
in 1960	---	---	---	.32	.48	.57	.63	.66
in 1970	---	---	---	---	.32	.48	.57	.63
in 1980	---	---	---	---	---	.32	.48	.57
in 1990	---	---	---	---	---	---	.32	.48
in 2000	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	.32
Full Population	.59	.59	.59	.59	.59	.59	.59	.59

Table 4
 Simulated Constraint between Political Attitudes and Party Identification
 Over Time and across Cohorts

II. New Party Difference Emerges in 1970

Came of Age:	Year							
	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
in 1930	.00	.00	.00	.00	.24	.25	.25	.26
in 1940	---	.00	.00	.00	.27	.28	.29	.29
in 1950	---	---	.00	.00	.30	.32	.34	.35
in 1960	---	---	---	.00	.33	.39	.43	.45
in 1970	---	---	---	---	.32	.48	.58	.63
in 1980	---	---	---	---	---	.32	.48	.58
In 1990	---	---	---	---	---	---	.32	.48
in 2000	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	.32
Full Population	.00	.00	.00	.00	.27	.31	.36	.42

Table 5
 Simulated Constraint between Political Attitudes and Party Identification
 over Time and across Cohorts

III. New Party Difference Emerges in 1970 and Grows Thereafter

Came of Age:	Year							
	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
in 1930	.00	.00	.00	.00	.24	.28	.31	.33
in 1940	---	.00	.00	.00	.27	.31	.34	.48
in 1950	---	---	.00	.00	.30	.36	.41	.45
in 1960	---	---	---	.00	.33	.43	.51	.58
in 1970	---	---	---	---	.32	.53	.69	.82
in 1980	---	---	---	---	---	.35	.58	.75
In 1990	---	---	---	---	---	---	.39	.63
in 2000	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	.42
Full Population	.00	.00	.00	.00	.27	.34	.44	.55

Table 6
 Constraint between Political Attitudes and Party Identification over Time

	1972-1976	1980-1984	1988-1992	1996-2004
Evaluation of Labor Unions	.24	.27	.29	.36
Government Social Spending	---	.33	.32	.43
Government Job Assistance	.23	.29	.30	.34
Limited Government	---	---	.38	.42
New Deal Issues Index	.31	.37	.43	.50
Government Aid to Blacks	.14	.24	.23	.32
Evaluation of Blacks	.14	.15	.18	.15
Evaluation of Women's Movement	.11	.21	.31	.33
Women's Role	.01	.07	.06	.14
Race & Gender Issues Index	.14	.23	.31	.38
Abortion	-.06	.04	.07	.14
Church Attendance	-.01	.03	.04	.11
Gay Rights	---	.13	.17	.25
Traditional Values	---	---	.15	.23
Cultural Issues Index	-.03	.07	.13	.24
Ideological Self-Identification	.36	.37	.39	.53

Note: Entries are Pearson correlations between party identification and the variable named in the row. The data come from the NES Surveys.

Table 7
Constraint between Political Attitudes and Party Identification
over Time and across Cohorts

	72-76	80-84	88-92	96-04
New Deal Issues				
Came of age: before 1964	.32	.40	.46	.54
Came of age: 1964-1968	.18	.37	.51	.56
Came of age: 1972-1976	.17	.39	.45	.50
Came of age: 1980-1984	---	.24	.37	.45
Came of age: 1988-1992	---	---	.28	.42
Came of Age: 1996-2000	---	---	---	.38
Race & Gender Issues				
Came of age: before 1964	.13	.23	.25	.30
Came of age: 1964-1968	.18	.26	.42	.38
Came of age: 1972-1976	.19	.31	.37	.42
Came of age: 1980-1984	---	.23	.35	.38
Came of age: 1988-1992	---	---	.31	.39
Came of Age: 1996-2000	---	---	---	.38
Cultural Issues				
Came of age: before 1964	-.05	.04	.10	.15
Came of age: 1964-1968	.02	.13	.18	.26
Came of age: 1972-1976	.01	.14	.22	.36
Came of age: 1980-1984	---	.06	.14	.22
Came of age: 1988-1992	---	---	.18	.30
Came of Age: 1996-2000	---	---	---	.29

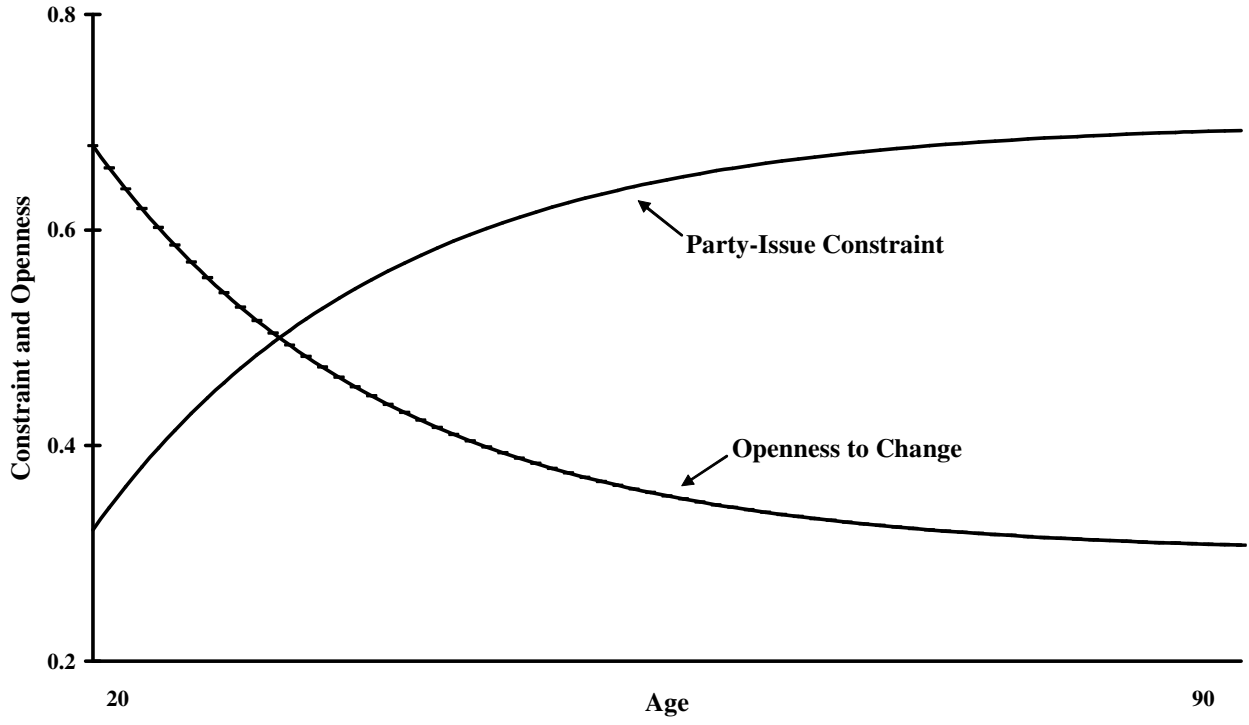
Note: Entries are Pearson correlations between party identification and the variable named in the row, calculated for each cohort indicated. The data come from the NES Surveys.

Table 8
The Issue Basis of Party Identification
over Time and across Cohorts

	72-76	80-84	88-92	96-04
Came of age: before 1964				
New Deal Issues	.33***	.38***	.47***	.51***
Race & Gender Issues	.04*	.06*	.06*	.04
Cultural Issues	-.04	.04	.06	.11***
R-squared	.11	.17	.26	.31
Came of age: 1964-1968				
New Deal Issues	.28***	.33***	.48***	.49***
Race & Gender Issues	.09*	.13**	.14**	.13**
Cultural Issues	.01	.11**	.19**	.16***
R-squared	.10	.18	.40	.38
Came of age: 1972-1976				
New Deal Issues	.16**	.35***	.43***	.39***
Race & Gender Issues	.16**	.15***	.10*	.11**
Cultural Issues	.00	.08*	.17***	.27***
R-squared	.06	.20	.31	.35
Came of age: 1980-1984				
New Deal Issues	---	.20***	.33***	.39***
Race & Gender Issues	---	.13*	.21***	.15***
Cultural Issues	---	.09	.05	.16***
R-squared	---	.09	.22	.30
Came of age: 1988-1992				
New Deal Issues	---	---	.19**	.35***
Race & Gender Issues	---	---	.23***	.21***
Cultural Issues	---	---	.19**	.16***
R-squared	---	---	.18	.30
Came of Age: 1996-2004				
New Deal Issues	---	---	---	.29***
Race & Gender Issues	---	---	---	.17**
Cultural Issues	---	---	---	.25***
R-squared	---	---	---	.27

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients (first three rows of each set) and R-squared coefficients (fourth row of each set) from multiple regression analyses treating party identification as the dependent variable and the three issue indexes as independent variables. The data come from the NES surveys.

Figure 1: Age-Related Socialization Dynamics



Appendix: Question Wording and Index Construction

All measures were scaled to range from 0 (most liberal or Democratic) to 1 (most conservative or Republican).

Questions used in the analysis of both the political socialization panel and the NES studies

1. *Party Identification, 7-point scale* Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (Strongly, or Not Strongly). [For Indeps: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or to the Democratic party?]

2. *Ideological Identification, 7-point scale* We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

3. *Government Job Assistance, 7-point scale* Some people feel that the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Suppose these people are at one end of this scale -- at point number 1. Others believe that the government should let each person get ahead on his or her own. Suppose these people are at the other end -- at point number 7. And other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?

4. *Government Aid to Minorities, 7-point scale* Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every possible effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks and other minority groups. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves. (Continues with self-placement request.)

5. *Women's Role, 7-point scale* Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government. Others feel that women's place is in the home. (Continues with self-placement request.)

6-8. *Evaluation of Blacks (6), Women's Movement (7), and Labor Unions (8) on the Feeling*

Thermometer (In the socialization study the term “Negroes” was used in 1965- 973: “Blacks” used in 1973-1997. “Women’s Liberation Movement” used in 1973-1982; “Women’s Movement” used in 1997. NES also contains similar changes.) There are many groups in America and we would like to get your feelings towards some of them using something we call a ‘feeling thermometer.’ Here's how it works . . . [explanation is given to respondent]. Where would you put (GROUP)?

Questions used only in the political socialization panel study

9. *Legalization of Marijuana, 7-point scale* Some people think that the use of marijuana should be made legal. Others think that the penalties for using marijuana should be set higher than they are now.

(Continues with usual self-placement request.)

10. *School Integration* Some people say that the government in Washington should see to it that white and black children are allowed to go to the same schools. Others claim that this is not the government's business. Have you been concerned enough about this question to favor one side over the other? [If yes] Do you think the government in Washington should see to it that white and black children go to the same schools or stay out of the area as it is none of its business?

11. *Prayer in School* Some people think it is all right for the public schools to start each day with a prayer. Others feel that religion does not belong in the public schools but should be taken care of by the family and the church. Have you been interested enough in this to favor one side over the other? [If Yes] Which do you think -- schools should be allowed to start each day with a prayer or religion does not belong in the schools?

Questions used only in the NES studies

12. *Government Social Spending* Some people think the government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education, in order to reduce spending. Other people feel that it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. (Continues with self-placement request.)

13. *Limited Government* Formed by averaging the responses to three forced-choice questions: Next, I am going to ask you to choose which of two statements I read comes closer to your own opinion. You might agree to some extent with both, but we want to know which one is closer to your views.” (1) One, the less government the better; or Two, there are more things that government should be doing. (2) One, we need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems; or Two, the free market can handle these problems without government being involved. (3) One, the main reason government has become bigger over the years is because it has gotten involved in things that people should do for themselves; or Two, government has become bigger because the problems we face have become bigger. Respondents with missing data on two or more component variables were omitted.

14. *Abortion* There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view? You can just tell me the number of the opinion you choose. 1. By law, abortion should never be permitted. 2. The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger. 3. The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established. 4. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice. In the 1972 and 1976 surveys the response option wording was slightly different.

15. *Gay Rights* Averaged responses from (1) feeling thermometer toward “Gay men and lesbians, that is, homosexuals” and (2) responses to the question: Do you favor or oppose laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination? “Depends” and “Don’t Know” responses were coded in between the favor and oppose responses. Cases with missing data on both component variables were omitted.

16. *Traditional Values* Averaged responses from two Likert questions: (1) “The newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society,” (2) “This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties.” Responses ranged from agree strongly to disagree strongly. Cases with missing data on either variable were omitted.

17. *Church Attendance* Based on a question about frequency with which R attended religious services. The exact question wording changed in 1990. Responses were coded: 1=Every week or more frequently, .5 Almost every week, once or twice a month, 0=A few times a year, never, or no religious preference.

NES Index Composition *New Deal Issues*--items 3, 7, 12-13. *Race and Gender Issues*—4-7. *Cultural issues*--14-17.

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