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The Effect of U.S. Political Party Polarization on Negative Partisanship Among U.S. Citizens

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Political Science Honors Thesis:

The Effect of U.S. Political Party Polarization on Negative Partisanship Among U.S. Citizens

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Introduction:

Predictability has long been a defining characteristic of stable democracies, especially that of the United States. Elections at state and national levels are expected to involve candidates who eventually dominate the polls by garnering popular support and partaking in the political and cultural norms that help to bolster their support and display their qualification for office. At the end of campaigns, votes tend to produce candidates or representatives that parties can agree on, and despite disagreements both the masses and political elites concede to whomever the victor of state and national elections may be. The unexpected twists and turns of the 2016 election seem at odds with the historical predictability of American democracy, and intimate that there are political changes brewing that are worth investigating. One of the factors that can help us understand these changes is how voters feel about current issues in American politics and the political representatives that champion those issues. The interplay between the masses and political elites is important to understanding how this current election has brought about such tension between political parties.

The two 2016 presidential candidates for the current election both have unprecedented unfavorable ratings, both sitting around the 52-59% (*Real Clear Politics*, October 27th 2016). To start, the candidates themselves could not possibly be more different. That they both represent such intensely opposite views of the key issues this election cycle reflects an increasing dearth of common ground between parties. Increasing polarization coupled with high un-favorability ratings of both presidential candidates and parties in general has led to the formation of a relatively new concept: negative partisanship. Negative partisanship is a phenomenon where the masses form opinions, and even cast votes, driven more so by negative opinions of their opposing party than positive opinions of their own party (*Pew Research Center*, 2016;

Abramowitz and Webster, 2016). A Pew Research Center study found that the majority of partisans have "very unfavorable" views of the opposing party. Even independents that identified themselves as Republican or Democratic leaning partisans showed highly negative views of their opposing party. The importance of party can also be seen in the drastic increase in straight ticket voting, that is when voters vote for a presidential candidates and U.S. House member of the same political party. In 2012, 94% of voters voted for the same party in both races (DeSilver, 2016). I hypothesize that the intense resurgence of negative partisanship in the past few election cycles is due to an increase in polarization among party elites. Due to this I will be trying to discover if negative partisanship and party polarization are directly related. I hypothesize a direct relationship because the literature suggests that typically voters respond to perceived increases in polarization of the political elites that represent them with increasingly polarized beliefs themselves.

Literature Review:

The first important concept to understanding negative partisanship is to understand how it works among the masses. Partisanship is defined as prejudice or bias towards a specific cause. Negative partisanship, is then defined as prejudice or bias against a specific cause. For the purposes of my research, this prejudice is specifically prejudice against an opposing political party and its ideology. Below are graphs by Pew Research center, illustrating the prevalence of negative sentiment towards survey takers opposing parties. A key part of understanding negative partisanship and how it works is that it is not necessarily proportional to its counterpart, positive partisanship.

Majorities have deeply negative views of other party

Republican attitudes about the **Democratic Party**

100% ·

91%

74%

Unfavorable   58%

21%

Very unfavorable

0

1994   2016

Democratic attitudes about the **Republican Party**

100% ·

86%

59%   Unfavorable   55%

17%   Very unfavorable

0

1994   2016
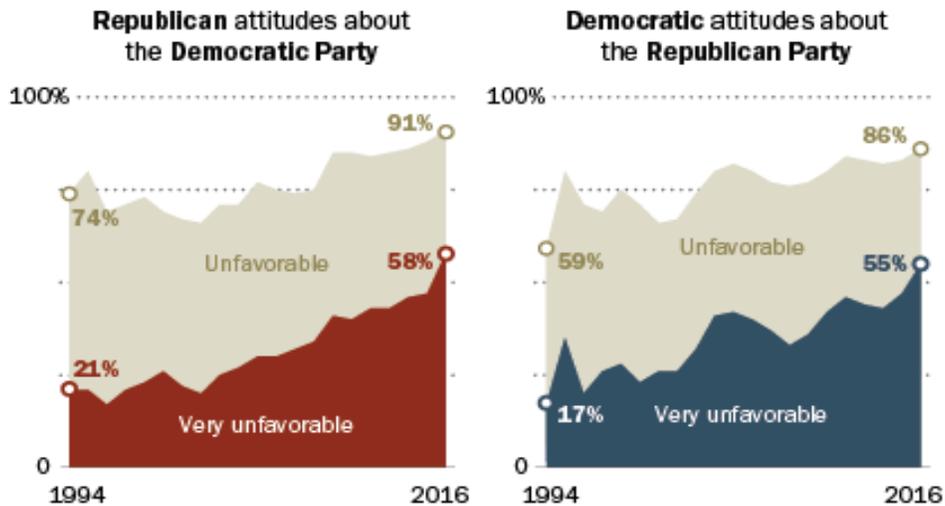
Source: Survey conducted April 12-19, 2016.

"Partisanship and Political Animosity in 2016." *Pew Research Center: U.S. Politics and Policy*. Pew Research Center, 22 June 2016. Web. 12 Sept. 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2016/06/22/1-feelings-about-partisans-and-the-parties/>.

Prior to recent studies on the nature of partisanship, positive and negative partisanship were thought to correspond to each other as they increased or decreased (Medeiros, Noël, 2013). It was thought that as an individual's bias towards the political party they identified with increased, their individual bias against the opposing party would increase by the same increments (Medeiros, Noël, 2013). Research now suggests that not only do negative partisanship and positive partisanship function independently of each other, but the two are also often influenced by very different political factors like economic conditions, ethnic factions and identity, and ideological differences (Medeiros, Noël, 2013). Of each of those factors, perceived ideological distance from opposing political parties more strongly impacts negative partisanship than positive (Medeiros, Noël, 2013). This distance heavily influences voter decision-making, and negative feelings toward parties tend to carry more weight with voters in general (Greene, 1999). I would like to take current knowledge a step further and investigate if ideological distance

compounded by an increase in perceived party polarization has increased negative partisanship among the masses.
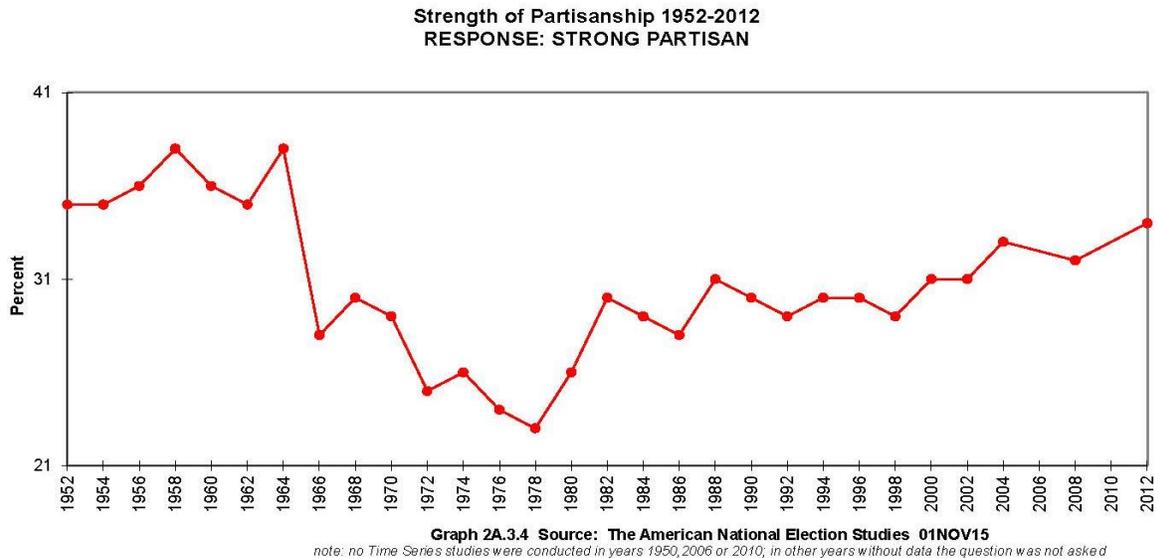
The current presidential election has provided fodder and an abundance of polling data to help examine the recent rise in the phenomenon of negative partisanship. With almost identical and relatively unfavorable ratings for both political parties presidential candidates, it's worth considering that there are factors other than the candidate's qualifications that add to the occurrence of these unfavorable ratings. When Hillary Clinton conceded the presidential nomination to president Obama in 2009, her favorability ratings were at 66% whereas during the 2016 presidential election they stood at 52.4% (*Real Clear Politics*, October 27th 2016). In order to study negative partisanship, the next task of my review of the literature is to provide evidence that it indeed exists among the American electorate.

One source of evidence for the resurgence of negative partisanship is a Pew Research Center study that asked about a multitude of indicators of negative sentiment towards parties. Based on the results of the survey, Pew concluded that negative partisanship is rampant and intense in America. The research study found that roughly 61% percent of democrats and 68% of republicans rate their feelings toward their opposing party as "cold" (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). The concept of "cold" for the purpose of the survey was measured on what's commonly referred to as a feeling thermometer. Survey-takers were instructed to rate certain groups based on their "warm" or "cold" feelings towards them, warm feelings being from 51-100, cold being from 0-49 (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). The mid point, 50, was considered a neutral point. On average, people rated their co-partisans around 76 (democrats) or 69 (republicans), well into the warm or positive range (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). When asked to rate their feelings towards their opposing party, on average democrats gave republicans a 31, and republicans gave

democrats a 29, well into the cold or negative range (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). The same research study showed that since Eisenhower's presidency, the gap between presidential approval by members of the president's party versus the opposing party has consistently grown as well (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). To help illustrate that the phenomena has become increasingly salient in recent years, Pew compared the views of opposing parties in the year 2000 to views of opposing parties in 2016. In 2000 23% of democrats and 26% of republicans had "unfavorable" views of the opposing political party (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). By contrast, in 2016 91% of republicans and 86% of democrats have unfavorable views of the opposing party (*Pew Research Center*, 2016).

One alternative hypothesis is that these indicators actually point to anti-party sentiment rather than negative partisanship. What one would expect with anti-party sentiment is that voters have comparably negative views of both parties, and by contrast the most recent data compiled by Pew shows they indeed have significantly more negative views of opposing parties than their own. For that reason, I argue that Pew research has found indicators of negative partisanship and not the rise of anti-party sentiment. The sharp increase has likely been affected by the current election cycle, but the election could only account for roughly a 12% increase since 2014 at the very earliest (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). All in all, there is an abundance of polling data from this election that illustrates the depth of negative partisanship in comparison to previous elections. The rise is relatively recent, and sharp, towards both political parties. I argue this consistency along party lines shows that there is compounding and important factors aside from the actual presidential candidates themselves that have added to the strength of negative partisanship (*Pew Research Center*, 2016; Ferreira, Fernando, Gyourko 2007).

The graph below delineates the increase in measures of partisanship gathered by the American National Election Studies survey.

Strength of Partisanship 1952-2012
RESPONSE: STRONG PARTISAN

Graph 2A.3.4 Source: The American National Election Studies 01NOV15
note: no Time Series studies were conducted in years 1950, 2006 or 2010; in other years without data the question was not asked

American National Election Studies. (n.d.). Retrieved October, 2016, from http://www.electionstudies.org/ANES 2016 Pilot Study

That voters align more along party lines, and have been shown to participate increasingly in "straight ticket" voting; voting locally and nationally within the same party, appears to illustrate this (Ferreira, Fernando, Gyourko, 2007) Some argue that this strict alignment and increased straight ticket voting is another indicator of negative partisanship and helps to perpetuate ideological divides (Ferreira, Fernando, Gyourko, 2007). Due to evidence that party has become increasingly salient to voters both in national elections and state elections, negative partisanship appears to be closely related to opinions of parties in general, rather than the specific candidates that represent them for presidential elections. As the parties advance their objectives and work to appeal to their constituents, they consistently tailor their message along demographic lines, and continue to divide voters along many ideological issues.

Equally important to understanding the phenomena of negative partisanship is the way elite political behavior influences mass behavior. Party elites generally include representatives in any public office, or those campaigning for any given public office. The relationship is complex

in that one could argue for a causal relationship in either direction. It's been questioned whether the pressures of reelection cause political elites to adopt the beliefs of their constituencies, or whether political elites help shape the opinions of their constituencies by campaigning and aligning themselves within the broader scope of their party (Greene, 1999). Since the 1950's, when partisanship was high by many measures including surveys by the American National Election Study, political science research has suggested that indeed it is elite behavior that influences mass behavior (Brewer, 2005; Hetherington, 2001, Abramowitz, Alan, Webster, 2016). Research on the nature of the relationship indicates that masses respond mostly to the input they receive from political elites, and considering the pervasive nature of news in social media, can significantly influence the "information environment" (Hetherington, 2001). For clarification, although the term polarization is opposite of cohesion conceptually, for the sake of my research both refer to the same phenomena. I make that distinction because some of the literature included in this section of the literature refers to party cohesion instead of polarization, but the two terms are conceptually the same. As party elites give party-oriented cues and make ideological distinctions to emphasize party differences, masses will respond in a party-centric manner (Hetherington, 2001). Those cues include things such as endorsements of fellow party members that may not be well aligned with their own beliefs, or using partisan rhetoric to criticize the opposing party. News media can be the key "core intermediary" between the public and political elites (Norris, 2004). With the deluge of media news that every day people get regularly, it would be easy to see how the media could be a key transmitter of messages from the elites to the public (Norris, 2004). The effects of partisan media can also impact the public's views and relationships with political elites, and with parties in general (Norris, 2004).

When elites consistently communicate to voters that they are ideologically at odds with their opposing political party on a multitude of issues, it indicates to voters that leadership by either party will lead to a distinct and unique future (Brewer, 2005). The belief that a candidate's leadership will lead to an outcome that would be vastly different from its opposing candidate's leadership due to their party identification and the values associated with it is a key part of negative partisanship (*Pew Research Center*, 2016). The notion that party indicates future leadership by a given representative, coupled with unfavorable views of the opposing party, can actually lead to fear of the opposition taking leadership. This leads into the next key concept to understanding how elite behavior influences mass opinion.

Methods:

I composed a study of the U.S. during 2014 to investigate the relationship between party polarization and increasing negative partisanship. I measured both negative partisanship among U.S. citizens and polarization among political elites in order to determine the relationship between the two. In order to measure negative partisanship, I used a set of survey data gathered through the 2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES). The CCES is a national stratified sample survey that's conducted by YouGov and Polimetrix with support from the National Science Foundation. The CCES reports their raw data from roughly 50,000 randomly sampled Americans and includes numerous different types of questions to capture a breadth of information about Americans political opinions and demographics. They include common content questions concerning characteristics of the public such as race, income, or age, and additionally incorporate evolving political content questions to try and capture public political sentiments regarding recent events. Some examples may include questions about approval of Barack Obama, or concerns regarding Second Amendment rights in light of recent legislation on

the matter. This survey includes political content questions that I will use as my measure of negative partisanship, as well as common content questions that will help to provide measures of factors like media exposure or self identified political ideology. The specific survey questions that I will use as my measures of negative partisanship will be two questions asking respondents to express their feelings of approval for their state senators, and their state house representatives.[1]

This data, in conjunction with CCES indicators of party alignment will both inform my measures of negative partisanship as reflected by opinions of state representatives. In order to measure polarization among elites, I will use a data set compiled by Boris Shor, and Nolan McCarty. Their data set uses a combination of state legislative roll call data, federal legislative roll call data, and ideal point surveys in order to produce both individual and aggregate measures of political elite polarization (Shor, McCarty 2011). The ideal point measure will be what I use to indicate the level of polarization experienced within state legislatures. In keeping with the semantic scheme laid by Shor and McCarty, I will refer to the data from their compilation that's pertinent to my research as a polarization score.

To further clarify why Shor and McCarty's data will be used as a measure of polarization, ideal points can be understood as a point on a two-dimensional ideological spectrum, ranging from conservative to liberal. Ideal points are used to quantify individual's ideological leanings, and in particular can be used as a measure of polarization when two competing parties scores are compared. The portion of Shor and McCarty's data that I will be using is that which compares parties as a whole – the aggregate ideal point dataset. I will not be using Shor and McCarty's calculated ideal points, but rather the difference in mean ideal points calculated for both the house and the senate of each state. I will use this as my polarization score because this difference

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[1] Party affiliation was not made explicitly known to survey respondents.

is a measure of the ideological distance between parties within each state legislature. Ideal points range from -1 to 1. For example, if the California House of Representatives had a polarization score of 2, that would indicate that one of their parties scored a -1 and the other a 1, meaning the two sit on opposing ends of the ideological spectrum. In order to compare the relationships between political elites and voters, I will compare data on negative partisanship and legislature polarization scores across states.

Unfortunately Shor and McCarty have been able to compile most states roll call data, but did not have sufficient roll call or representative survey data for seven states. The data set is missing house polarization scores for Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, and Nebraska, and senate polarization scores for Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Texas. Due to the fact that the senate and the house each have separate polarization scores, I will also run their regressions separately. This fits well with the CCES survey data, which asks respondents about their approval of both their senatorial representatives, and their house representatives. It was difficult to find survey questions that could reflect other factors that might affect negative partisanship within the large collection of CCES data, but there are some of response questions that I will include in my analysis. Factors that could contribute to negative partisanship that I would ideally be able to control for are factors like social media, perceived quality of individual candidates regardless of party association, and general dissatisfaction with the American political system. Only some of those factors are properly addressed and quantified in the CCES data, and so I will use those few that are available as my control variables to account for as many outside influences as possible. In this section I will explain the control variables and their coding, and the actual questions as they were presented to respondents can be found in the survey question appendix.

Ideology

Another possible indicator of partisanship would be the strength of the respondent's belief in their political ideology, which is why I will include the question in CCES on ideology, titled ideo5. This question will help to somewhat identify the strength of respondents partisan leanings.

Media Sources

One of the control variables included is a measure of news media exposure, which has 4 indicators that will be used in the regression. The respondent is asked to select each of the media sources presented that the respondent has seen in the past hours. This question was included because one could presume that the more sources a respondent chose, the more exposure they get to various sources of news.

News Interest

Another variable the regression will control for is interest in news media, measured by a survey question that asks respondents how interested they are in following political news. I have included this variable in the hopes of exploring the impact of media exposure on partisanship. There is reason to believe this variable as well as News Media may have a notable impact as Pew Research Center found a 10% increase in adult social networking usage between 2012 and 2016 (Perrin, 2015).

Partisanship

Partisanship is indicated by respondent's approval or disapproval of their house and senate representatives as indicated by their responses to question 4. The question was filled in with the respective house or senate member for respondents in their given state, and serves as a measure of negative partisanship. I chose to use this to measure negative partisanship because

higher disapproval of a candidate of the opposing party would indicate greater negative

partisanship.

        I argue each of these questions can account for some of the contributing factors to

negative partisanship, although ideally I would have more indicators of factors outside of

negative partisanship that would influence my results. I argue the Boris and Shor data serve as

both a good measure of the real polarization experienced between elites and as an observable

instance of party polarization that can be analyzed statistically and has tangible effects on voter

perception of political elites. Political elite's voting records are often used in their future

campaigns as signals to voters that they take action on issues important to them, or are used

against them by their opponents to try and demonstrate poor judgment. For example, during the

current election Hillary Clinton's prior voting record on important issues such as the transpacific

partnership has been mentioned frequently to demonstrate her quality as a candidate. In that way

I argue roll call voting records can be used to extrapolate real elite polarization in addition to

elite polarization that is perceived by the masses. The corresponding ideal points measures and

polarization scores should serve as strong estimations of the partisanship observed by these

political elites voters.

        To complete my analysis, I will look at both measures of negative partisanship and party

polarization during the year 2014, an important year leading up to the tumultuous 2016 election.

The reason I have chosen Shor and McCarty data is that it is some of the most comprehensive

state roll and ideology score data that is available for years as recent at 2014. The other important

factor is that their data provides polarization based on extensive roll call data. Using the

difference in median ideal points calculated directly from roll call and ideology survey data will

work well for my analysis not only because Boris and Shor provided a highly nuanced method of

ideology measurement, but also because the scores fit nicely into regression models (Deposato, 2003; Born, Nevison 1974).

<u>Results</u>

For the statistical analysis of the ideal point score and survey data, I estimated separate linear regressions for both the house ideal point data, and the senate ideal point data. For both regressions, I included each of the sets of survey response data for the questions mentioned in the methods section of this paper. For both regressions, my adjusted R square values were extremely low. That is likely due to the fact that the data set I used was very large, including over 50,000 survey respondents. The Adjusted R square for the Senate polarization score and approval regression was .080, and the Adjusted R square for the same regression for House data was .072. Both of the adjusted R Square values indicated that the independent variables included in the regression accounted for less than 10% of the variation in the measure of partisanship.

House & Senate Data Regression	House			Senate		
	Adjusted R-Square: .072			Adjusted R-Square: .080		
	Unstandardized B	Sig.	Standardized B	Unstandardized B	Sig.	Standardized B
Chamber Difference	.017	.055	.008	-.059	.000	-.032
News Interest	.228	.000	.236	.153	.000	.171
Media Sources	.080	.000	.069	.047	.000	.044
Ideology	.010	.013	.011	.148	.000	.168

Figure 1. Table of Bivariate Regression Results, N=56,200. Sig. indicates significance.

For the initial regression that I ran on both house and senate values each independent variable showed a significant relationship was present except for the measure of house polarization, listed as chamber difference significance. House difference came out at .055 so it

just barely missed the threshold for significance, but all the same a relationship could not be statistically established. By contrast, the senate difference measure of polarization showed a significant relationship with negative partisanship, but it also showed there was a significant relationship with news interest, media sources and ideology. These results suggest there is certainly a relationship between exposure to news media and interest in political affairs, but it is not clear whether negative partisans are simply more likely to also be engaged and interested in news, or whether news exposure causes an increase in partisanship. This was not the central focus of the analysis, but because there is a consistently significant relationship between the measures of negative partisanship and both measures of media exposure, it would be interesting to try and further understand this relationship. Ideology also showed a significant relationship, but this variable was really included as a check on the influence of polarization within the chambers. If chamber polarization was not significant, as was the case for house data, it could suggest that polarization is simply impacted by other factors like news media, which was significant for both regressions. For the senate data, it's unclear if ideology was significant because elite polarization increased partisanship, or elite polarization and media acted as compounding variables. This relationship is especially unclear because it was significant in both regressions, but elite polarization was only significant for the senate polarization measure.

House Data Correlation Coefficients

	Media Sources	News Interest	Ideology	Partisanship	House Polarization
Media Sources	1	.337*	.109*	.151*	-.007
News Interest	.337*	1	.212*	.258*	-.028*
Ideology	.109*	.212*	1	.063*	-.043*
Partisanship	.151*	.258*	.063*	1	<u>.000</u>
House Polarization	-.007	-.028*	-.043*	<u>.000</u>	1

Figure 2. Results from a bivariate regression of control variables, house partisanship and house polarization. The important statistical relationship that was hypothesized about has been underlined. N=56,200.

A bivariate regression was then conducted in order to further dissect the relationships between the dependent and independent variables included. For the house data included above, the big takeaways were that house polarization did not have a significant relationship with partisanship, but the variable News Interest, Media Sources, and Ideology did. Media sources, News Interest, and Ideology were all positively correlated with partisanship, and negatively correlated with House Polarization (although media sources was not statistically significantly related to house polarization). Both of these relationships may indicate that exposure to news media has a very significant impact on negative partisanship. This regression may suggest that negative partisanship functions completely independently of elite polarization. By contrast, there was a significant relationship between negative partisanship and elite polarization within senate data, although it had an inverse relationship, which was not what I was expecting.

Senate Data Correlation Coefficients

	Media Sources	News Interest	Ideology	Partisanship	Senate Polarization
Media Sources	1	.337*	.109*	.118*	-.005
News Interest	.337*	1	.212*	.218	-.017*
Ideology	.109*	.212*	1	.218*	-.063
Partisanship	.118*	.218*	.218*	1	<u>-.047*</u>
Senate Polarization	-.005	-.017*	-.063*	<u>-.047*</u>	1

Figure 3. Results from a bivariate regression of control variables, senate partisanship and senate polarization. The important statistical relationship that was hypothesized about has been underlined.

A bivariate regression was also conducted with senate data. This regression yielded somewhat confusing results as there was a significant relationship between senate polarization and partisanship, but it moved in the opposite direction of what I expected. Similar to house data, senate polarization was significantly negatively correlated to News Interest, Media Sources, and Ideology. Those same three variables were, again similar to house data, also positively correlated with partisanship. The main take away from the analysis was that negative partisanship did not appear to be significantly impacted by party polarization directly as I was expecting, but negative partisanship was directly correlated with interest/use of news media.

<u>Inference:</u>

My statistical analyses left me without much support for my hypothesis. Instead, I did see a strong and consistent relationship between interest in news media as well exposure to news media with the instance of negative partisanship. I believe these two variables suggest there is a positive relationship to news media and negative partisanship. This finding suggests that future research should be devoted to the ways in which media can affect people's political opinions. What may be the cause of this relationship may actually simply be that more politically engaged

people pay closer attention to news, and multiple types of news, but further research may be able to help discern the direction of this relationship. Another reason this relationship may be present while negative partisanship is not as strongly significant may be that regardless of party polarization, exposure to political news could turn viewers against their local representatives. This exposure could even cause respondents to simply be more wary of giving their representatives strong approval ratings, because negative political news could lead to negativity towards politics. An additional factor I believe would have enhanced my analysis would be general approval ratings of the parties as a whole. This could help to distinguish if negative partisanship was directed towards state representatives or held consistently towards other representatives from the same party. This would be able to weed out any possible influence from local representatives that had extremely poor approval ratings regardless of their populations associations with that representative's party. This could also account for the influence of survey respondents that potentially didn't know the names of the representatives the survey listed to them.

Although some variables did prove significant in the ways I had predicted, there was some distance between the conceptual framing of negative partisanship and the actual measure used. The house and senate polarization measure is one I would argue is very close to the conceptual framework of polarization because it has been such a commonly used measure to quantify polarization and uses methods that aim for that exact purpose. By contrast, the negative partisanship data that was gleaned for the CCES survey was not specifically intended to measure negative partisanship, but rather citizen approval of their specific state representatives. It also asked respondents about legislators of the federal government, which did not align well with the state legislative polarization data created by Boris and Shor. Negative partisanship could be more

generally directed towards opposing parties, particularly high profile opposition party leaders, or even citizens that identify with the opposing party. The survey question was close enough because it did measure approval and disapproval of party members, but it was somewhat more restricted in terms of generalizability.

The survey itself also asks the respondent in a previous question to my measure of negative partisanship whether the respondent has heard of the representative, and I wonder if a lack of knowledge would lead to the tendency of people to consistently mark similar, but meaningless approval ratings. That would concern respondent psychology, but it would be interesting to include that survey question and see if citizens truly know much about their representatives, and if not how they tended to mark their responses in order to see if this skewed the data in any way. I also question if, even in the case of survey respondents that have heard of the representative that is listed in the survey, they actually know that representative's party. The survey does not assign each representatives party within the approval question, and I posit doing so could produce different results for survey respondents with a vague knowledge of their state politics. A *New York Times* article recently reported a survey in which a third of respondents didn't know Obamacare and the Affordable Care Act are the same thing, so it may be wrong to assume that respondents knew their state representatives political party and public reputation (Dropp K., Nyhan B. 2017).

The ideal dataset would have been the dataset used for the Pew Research study that initially inspired the thesis. Unfortunately, I did contact Pew Research Center and because of how recently the study was conducted the full dataset was not yet available to the public. Pew's data would have been ideal because it provided so many variations and ideal measurements of negative partisanship. As was introduced earlier, Pew utilized the feeling thermometer for both

sets of partisans, surveyed partisans on their favorable or unfavorable views of party leaders on either side of the aisle, and surveyed respondents about their feelings towards both partisans of the opposing and fellow partisans of their own party. If this dataset had additionally been recorded by state, which would allow for state-by-state comparison, this value of negative partisanship would be ideal.

All in all, the study of negative partisanship needs further investigation for a deeper understanding of its dynamic in American politics. It appears from my statistical analyses that the impact of news media additionally requires further study, as its prevalence in American politics could have drastic consequences. One area of study I predict will be receive much important attention is the impact of fake news in the 2016 election. It's been estimated that fake news was shared more than real news on media outlets such as Facebook in the final three months of the 2016 election, so it could follow that this phenomena had a real impact on the election and partisanship (Holan, 2016). I'd also be very interested to know where people typically receive their news information in the age of heightened social media use. I think it would be particularly telling to compare extreme partisans and more neutral partisans in terms of what news sources they use. Due to the fact that Facebook sorts the information its users receive by what their users seem to prefer, I think it would be really interesting to see if voters that use social media as a news source or use it very often seem to express more polarized views. Again, it would be difficult to determine whether users are simply more partisan in the first place which causes their Facebook feed to present them more partisan news, or whether users become more partisan as their feed gives them news that's more and more polarized based off their preferences.

Considering that exposure to news at all could have a general impact on voters partisan sentiments, one would expect that negative false news would too. This would also depend on the

assumption that false news would convince enough people of its validity, or would add to the

negativity some feel towards certain political actors. Research on negative partisanship is

underdeveloped, and seeing as it's now a reputably documented phenomenon, it seems

imperative that efforts are devoted to understanding its roots in American society. Although the

concepts I chose to investigate proved very difficult to operationalize given existing data on the

subject, I think further data collection by an organization like Pew Research that's specifically

driven towards better understanding how modern partisanship functions would be very valuable.

I also think starting a study of negative partisanship from the ground up that's geared towards

answering the question I posed would be more effective than piecing together datasets with some

unit of analysis problems like I had to due to a shortage of data on this subject. Although my

results were significant in a direction that was contrary to what I had predicted, I think the

findings are still an important step towards a better understanding of the way modern American

Politics functions among voters. I have not been able to find a scholarly explanation for the

statistical relationship that I found, but hopefully further investigation could provide one. The

data that Pew Research Center compiled could suggest that negative partisanship has taken such

a stronghold of American Politics; it could indeed be the new factor that decides our elections.

For that reason alone, negative partisanship, and its dynamics among voters and political elites,

requires greater attention within the field of political and social science research.

<u>Survey Question Appendix</u>

The enumerated questions below are the 2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey questions as they were given to respondents of the survey. The name of the corresponding control variable for each question is presented in bold above each question.

News Interest

1. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs...?

      1– Most of the time

      2– Some of the time

      3- Only now and then

      4– Hardly at all

      7– Don't know

Media Sources

2. In the past 24 hours have you ...(check all that apply)

      1- Read a blog

      2- Watch TV News

      3- Read a newspaper in print or online

      4- Listened to a radio news program or talk radio

      5- None of these

        *Note that 5 wasn't included

Ideology

3. Thinking about politics these days, how would you describe your own political viewpoint?

       1 – Very liberal

       2 - Liberal

       3 – Moderate

       4 – Conservative

       5 – Very Conservative

Partisanship

4. Question CC14_315a/b: Please indicate whether you approve of the job that each of the following is doing. [name of member of the house/senate]

       1 – Strongly approve

       2 – Approve

       3 – Disapprove

       4 – Strongly Disapprove

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