

The Fundamentals and Affective Polarization: How Long-Term Attitudes Shape Affect

John H. Aldrich
Suhyen Bae

Duke University
aldrich@duke.edu
suhyen.bae@duke.edu

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Loneliness

John H. Aldrich
Suhyen Bae

Motivation

The Fundamentals

Substance in Politics

Hypotheses

Data & Measures

Results

Two-way Fixed Effects
Models

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Two-way Fixed Effects
Models

Cross-Lagged Models

Conclusion

Motivating Background

- ▶ Partisanship is increasingly dominated by affective partisanship (Mason et al. 2021)
- ▶ Existing studies show that affective evaluations shape electoral behavior.
- ▶ What is the role of substance of politics, and what is the relationship between affect and substantive factors?

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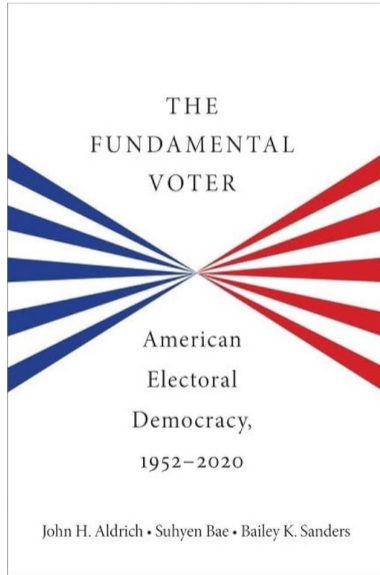
Two-way Fixed Effects
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Conclusion

What are the Fundamentals?

- ▶ Long-term enduring attitudes.
- ▶ Campbell et al. (1960) focuses on partisan identity.
- ▶ We identify four additional long-term factors: ideology, recurring issues, race, and economic evaluations.



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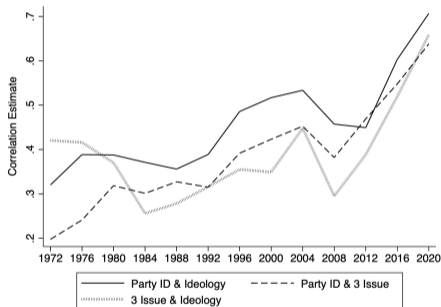
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What are the Fundamentals?

- ▶ We showed that these five long-term attitudes have grown increasingly correlated over time.
- ▶ The fundamentals collectively were increasingly aligned with presidential and with congressional vote choice.
- ▶ We found that the fundamentals were increasingly strongly correlated with affective partisanship, which in turn was closely related to the vote.



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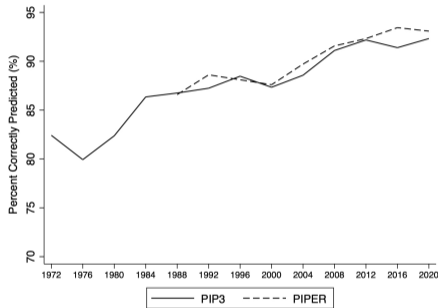


Figure: Fundamentals predicting presidential vote

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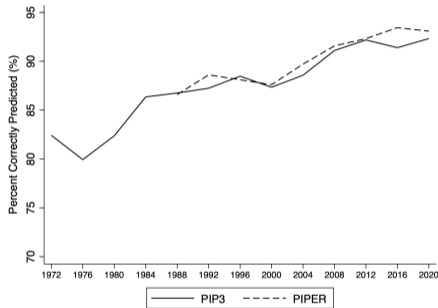


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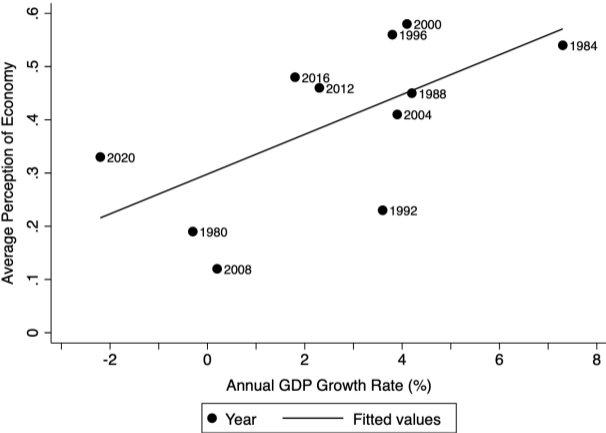


Figure: Perceived Change in Economy and Annual GDP Growth Rate, 1980-2020.

Substance in Politics

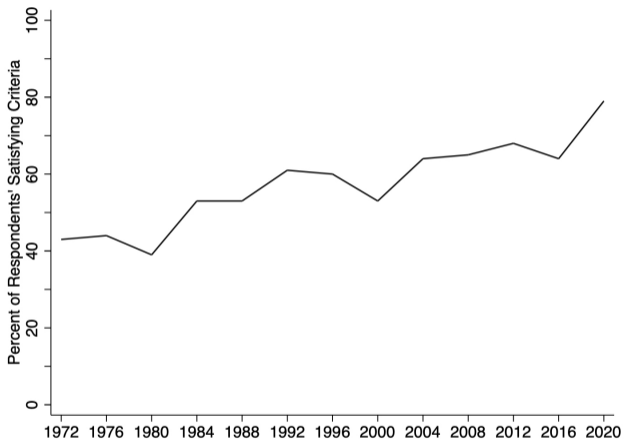


Figure: Percent of Respondents Satisfying the Ideology Voting Criteria, 1972-2020

Affect in Politics

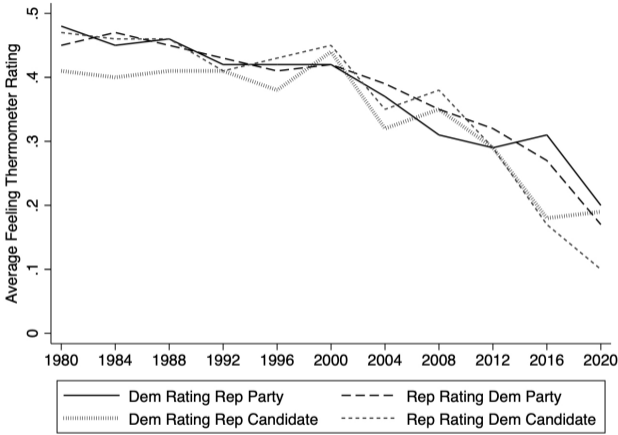


Figure: Partisan ratings of opposing party and opposing party candidates, 1980-2020.

Hypotheses

- ▶ Does affective polarization in 2016 influence the amount of information the voter can bring to bear on issues in 2020, or, vice versa, does knowing about ideology sufficient to employ it in choice in 2016 affect how affectively polarized the voter is in 2020?
- ▶ Our claim is that short-term affective and candidate trait evaluations and the long-term ideology and policy voting criteria are inter-related.
- ▶ If voter's don't have a position, if they don't know where the candidates stand, if they do but see no difference between the two candidates, or if they can't put the candidates even in the correct order on the scale, then they don't have sufficient information to use that issue in rendering their choice, including short-term affective or evaluation considerations.

Data & Measures

- ▶ ANES 2016-2020 panel helps to sort out the relationship between long-term attitudes and short-term evaluations.
- ▶ Substantive political content
 - ▶ Ideology & Policy voting criteria: self and candidate placement on ideology and five recurring issues (government spending, defense spending, health insurance, provision of jobs, and aid to minorities)
- ▶ Short-term affective evaluations
 - ▶ Affective polarization measure: Feeling thermometer
 - ▶ Candidate trait measure: strong leadership, knowledgeable, honest, cares about people
- ▶ Two-way fixed effects model & Cross-lagged structural equation model
 - ▶ Reverse causality

Data & Measures

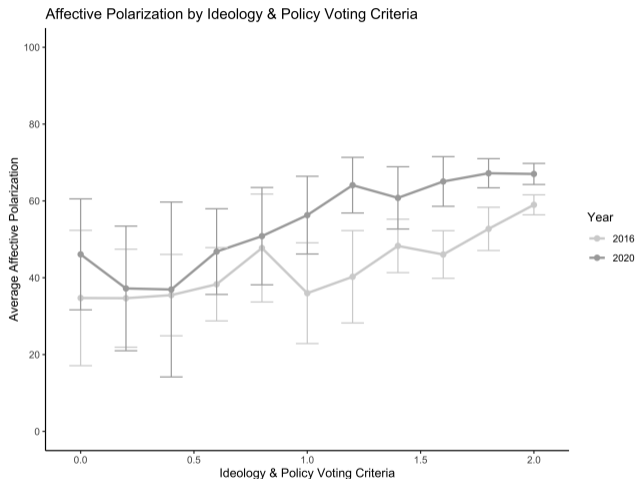


Figure: Affective polarization increases with substantive understanding of politics, with higher levels of polarization observed in 2020 compared to 2016.

Two-way Fixed Effects Model: Affect

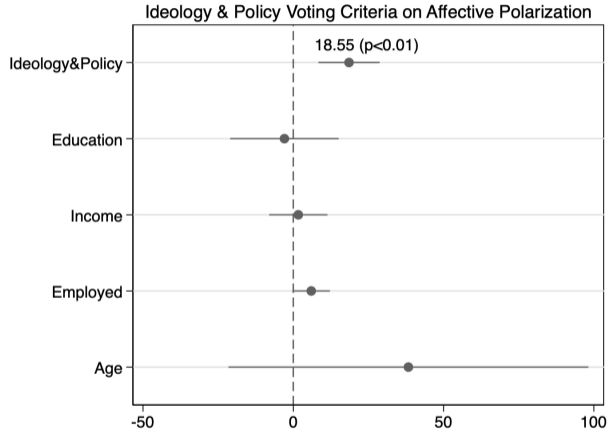


Figure: Individual-unit FE and Wave FE included. Bars represent 95% CI. Model is survey-weighted. N=4,547

Two-way Fixed Effects Model: Candidate Trait

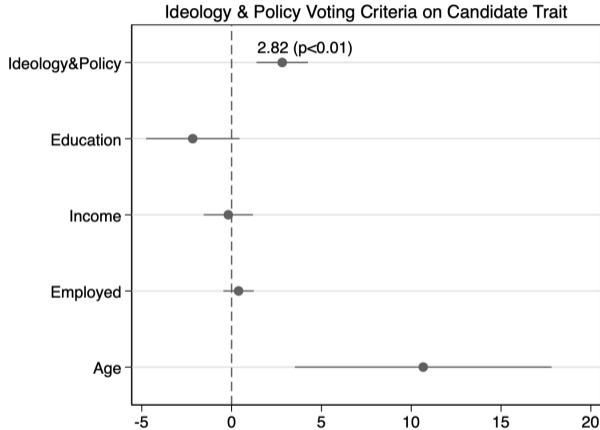


Figure: Individual-unit FE and Wave FE included. Bars represent 95% CI. Model is survey-weighted. N=4,638

Cross-Lagged Model: Affect

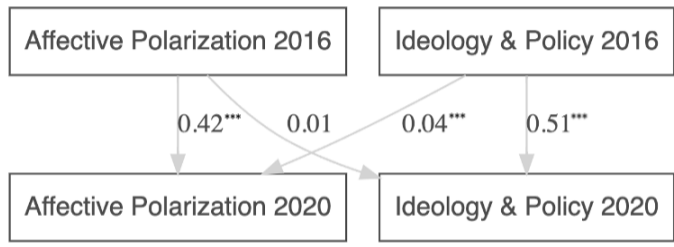


Figure: Models present standardized coefficients and are weighted to reflect survey-design. All variables are normalized on a 0-1 scale. N = 2,289

Cross-Lagged Model: Candidate Trait

Cross-Lagged Structural Equation Model with Covariates		
	Dependent variable:	
	Candidate Trait 2020 (1)	Ideology & Policy VC 2020 (2)
Ideology & Policy VC 2016	0.051*** (0.020)	0.435*** (0.029)
Candidate Trait 2016	0.456*** (0.036)	0.040 (0.037)
Education	-0.027* (0.015)	0.059*** (0.022)
Income	-0.011 (0.018)	0.127*** (0.015)
Employed	0.007 (0.011)	0.012 (0.015)
Age	0.061*** (0.019)	-0.023 (0.026)
Female	0.016* (0.010)	-0.011 (0.013)
Black	0.023 (0.015)	-0.098*** (0.026)
Other Race	-0.019 (0.015)	-0.060*** (0.019)
Observations	2,149	2,149
R ²	0.239	0.301

Conclusion

- ▶ Satisfying Campbell et al.'s criteria for ideological and issue voting is significantly related to affective polarization across multiple methodological tests.
- ▶ Individuals who are more likely to have a substantive understanding of ideology and policy issues are also more likely to develop stronger polarizing views over time on affect and candidate evaluation.
- ▶ Substance in long-term attitudes are drivers of the short-term attitudes, rather than the reverse.
- ▶ Results emphasize the need to consider both substance and affective dimensions as they collectively shape the electorate's engagement with political candidates and issues.



Thank You!

Questions?

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