

Summary:

Most pundits suggest that a strong correlation can be drawn between economic inequality and the increased polarization of the mass public over time. Depending on whether or not an individual is of a higher or lower socioeconomic status tends to dictate which party platform the individuals tend to align with. The type of polarization in which individuals within a party begin to share the same viewpoints as other individuals within their party is often referred to as reduced dimensionality of conflict. Individuals of a higher socioeconomic status are likely to share the same viewpoint on a variety of topics. Many pundits often suggest that income is highly influential in determining the voting behavior of individuals and thus has led to a large divide between opposing parties. Individuals of a higher socioeconomic status tend to vote for Conservative representatives due to their policies that focus on decreasing the tax burden on the upper class and support more pro-business policies, while individuals of a lower socioeconomic group tend to vote for liberal representatives due to their increased social programs. The Democratic party supports policies in favor of those of a lower socioeconomic status, while the Republican party tends to support policies that are best for those of a higher socioeconomic status.

Connection between:

Religion, race, and economic inequality all coincide as an aspect of individuals' particular identities. Often times racial and economic aspects of an individual's identity coincide. African Americans tend to have a much lower median income than Whites. Often times, the policies that African Americans' would support, such as increased social programs or policies that decrease the criminalization of drug are similar policies that individuals of a lower socioeconomic status would be likely to support.

- Pundit James Brown suggests that individuals often do not vote for what is in their best economic interests, but rather what is best for their morals. White individuals of a lower socioeconomic status in the South are less likely to vote for the liberal party that would support social programs that assist them economically.
- Additionally, Bohr Shors suggests that the United States is increasingly polarized when it comes to social welfare, racial, and cultural issues.

Key theories Explaining the Dividing:

Deep Story

- A Parties economic policies have a large influence on their base supporters
 - o Democrats tend to focus on policies that will lower the unemployment rate in order to increase economic growth, while Republicans tend to focus on pro-business policies that assist wealthier individuals as a way to manifest economic growth. The policies that certain parties tend to back cater to a certain group of individuals. The Republican party tends to have policies that support..... Democrats tend to have policies that
 - o Suggests there is a positive causal relationship between income inequality and polarization. It is suggested that the median income of the Republican party has increased significantly while the income of the democratic party has decreased significantly. This displays the increasing polarization of income within parties.

Key theories Explaining the Dividing: Disagreements among Scholars

- Race a better indicator than economic standings.
 - o Studies from the American National Election Study suggests that race may be more of an indicator than economic standings. The study found that whites with a family income greater than \$150,000 were just slightly more to vote for a Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, in 2002 than families with a family income of \$30,000.
 - o Alternatively Fiorina suggests that polarization on policy issues is a result of party sorting and not polarization of voters' policy positions. Fiorina suggests that mass polarization is a result of the party being polarized.
 - o Other scholars such as Blank believe that economic standing is a better indicator of the perceived positions on politics than others.
 - o Pundits such as Zelizer attribute the mass polarization to the current media climates. Zelizer believe that polarization as a result partly by persuasion of cable outlets, but also through addition news exposure, which previously was not available in the past except for during the evening.

Long term consequences and effects

- Increased Inequality- Due to the gridlock politicians are unable to efficiently create policies that will alleviate the effects of inequalities.
- Gridlock- Gridlock as a result of political polarization prevents politicians from being able to effectively create policies necessary to alleviate the effects of inequalities. As a result, a perpetuation of income inequality has resulted.

What we don't know?

Still not sure if what exactly is the largest contributor to increased polarization.

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Barber discusses different facets that may have caused increased polarization. He discusses different aspects such as the media, wealth, social issues that have all led to the increasing polarization of the United States throughout the years. He also discusses how wealthier individuals tend to benefit from the policies of conservatives while less affluent individuals tend to benefit from the policies of the liberal party.