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"POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTISANSHIP: A LOOK AT THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE"

Friday, September 17, 2004

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Falk Auditorium
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM A TAPE RECORDING.]

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Panel:

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Larry M. Bartels
Donald E. Stokes Professor of Public and International Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University

Donald Green
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John Harwood
Political Editor, *Wall Street Journal*

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. NIVOLA: Good morning and welcome to Brookings.

I am Pietro Nivola, Director of the Governance Studies Program at Brookings.

The panel that you are about to hear is the first of five sessions on the 2004 election. It is co-sponsored by my program at Brookings and the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University.

I'm really grateful to Larry Bartels at Princeton and Tom Mann of Brookings for working so hard to arrange these events.

Today's discussion mostly takes a look at the American electorate.

Among the questions we will be addressing this morning are: How much partisanship is there among the voters? How do the partisan loyalties of voters develop and how have they changed? How do partisan lenses, so to speak, determine the way voters perceive issues, policies and candidates, indeed, their perceptions of reality? How, at the end of the day, is all this likely to play out in terms of actual voting behavior in the presidential election and in the various congressional races, especially in light of the fact that swing voters and competitive House seats are vanishing faster than I can get through my introductory remarks here?

Before introducing the panelists, please jot down the following dates for our next seminars. We are planning one on October 1st, October 15th, 29th and finally, a prelude deluge [ph] November 12th. So, be there.

Our five distinguished speakers this morning are Professor Larry Bartels, from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School, Alan Abramowitz, Professor of Political Science at Emory University, Professor Donald Green, of Yale's Political Science

Department, John Harwood of The Wall Street Journal and, of course, our very own Tom Mann.

Tom.

MR. MANN: Thanks very much, Pietro.

Welcome everyone. As Pietro said, we have in mind and have scheduled five seminars, four before the election, one afterwards. The idea originated with my good friend, Larry Bartels, who has a broader project called Promoting Popular Understanding of the American Electoral Process.

He became a Carnegie Fellow to pursue this project and got in touch with me and said, let's start here with a collaborative set of seminars at Brookings. We worked together to plan the seminars and to persuade some of our profession's most distinguished scholars to participate in them.

Now, you might have noticed that Washington tends to react excessively to each new poll or candidate miscue. The discussion of the American elections often times dwells on inside baseball and swings widely in response to new bits of information. We have just gone through one of those cycles, starting with the Republican Convention. A few early media polls shaped the coverage and led to an outpouring of advice from Democrats outside the campaign as to what the Kerry campaign needed to do to resurrect a candidacy on its deathbed.

Today's Washington Post found it newsworthy to put on page one a gossipy story about who is up and who is down in the campaign itself, while the story on Kerry's speech to the National Guard, the sharpest and most coherent statement in a two-month period lacking in coherent statements on Iraq, managed A20. Let the record show that John Harwood's Wall Street Journal had that as its lead item on page one.

Now, we had a series of four or, I think, five national polls that basically show the race returning to a dead heat, a plus or minus one percent lead, depending on whether one is looking at registered or likely voters. Therefore, I was getting ready to be treated to insightful analyses of how Kerry had turned around his campaign in the past week, but, alas, Gallup released a poll late yesterday showing a 14-point Bush lead in the field at the same time as Andy Kohut's Pew study. Andy, the former president of Gallup, used Princeton Survey Research. He found that the first three days in the field showed that large Bush lead and the next three days showed the race at parity.

Is this real? What are we to make of such wild swings in candidate sentiment? These are reported as news that then shapes the way in which reporters cover campaigns, the questions they ask of candidates. It certainly shapes the way commentary in the political community occurs.

The purpose of this series of seminars is to see if we can't distill what we think we have learned about the American electorate and about voting behavior, to look at some more structural, enduring features of elections and to see if and how that might help shed light on this election.

Now, to keep us honest and appropriately humble, we have asked a distinguished journalist to join each of our seminars. I can't imagine anyone better to kick this off than John Harwood, political editor at the Wall Street Journal, as Pietro said, who has covered the last five presidential campaigns and regularly provides some of the most cogent analyses of the electoral process.

I'm delighted with the colleagues that are here today. If you follow our seminar series, you will find Larry and yours truly will be here at all of the events. We will bring in fresh blood to transfuse us and to cover the sequence of topics, which will

start, as Pietro said, with partisanship today and then will look at the effect of campaigns. We will convene that panel the day after the first presidential debate. We will be looking at debates, at campaign advertising, media coverage, candidate travel, and the rest. Two weeks later, we will look at issues. How do issues shape or influence voting choices? Do voters really compare positions of candidates on issues, or is that more myth than reality? The fourth on mobilization and turnout is just before the election itself, and finally, mandates and governance will be held after the election.

So, here is our plan. Pietro has introduced our colleagues already. We are going to begin by having Larry make a brief presentation distilling some of what we know about parties and partisanship. Those of us in the way of the overhead are going to slip to the front seats here. Then we will all come back and begin conversation following up on Larry's presentation.

When we begin to run out of steam, I'm going to turn to you for questions that will no doubt recharge our batteries and carry us to higher levels of understanding about this election and elections in general.

So, I turn now to Larry.

PROFESSOR BARTELS: I want to begin by reiterating the thanks that Tom just offered to people at the Carnegie Corporation, who are in the happy habit of not only of supporting academic research, but also in the habit of supporting the dissemination of academic research in the broader world, which I think is a really valuable thing and which we do too little of. I also want to thank Tom and all the people at Brookings for their hospitality. I think this is going to be a really great series and I am pleased to be able to be involved in doing it down here in Washington.

My assignment for today is to say a little bit about partisanship and trends in partisanship and how they might matter, to set things up for the more general discussion. What I'm going to do is, to draw on data from a very important survey that has been conducted for more than 50 years now by the people at the University of Michigan, the National Election Study. Every two years, they have done a survey with a good deal of continuity in the questions that they have asked and the kinds of things that they have tried to get at.

Probably the most important question in that survey for 50 years is the question about party identification, which is really the central starting point for what we are going to talk about today.

The question that people have been getting asked for this half century: Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, and Independent or what? Then depending on how they answer, there is a follow up question. Do you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican or if you are an Independent or an other, do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?

Now, one thing to notice about this question is that the wording, generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself, is intended to tap something other than people's short term voting intentions or how they feel about the parties today. The idea is to get at some more underlying political disposition. The question does seem to have that effect, by comparison, for example, with questions that some of the other polling operations use that emphasize more how people are thinking at the time of the survey.

So, the idea here is to distinguish long-term attachment from short-term preference for one party or the other or voting tension for one party's candidates or the other.

The other is that, you can that what we get here is both a partisan dimension running from strong Republicans at one extreme to strong Democrats at the other extreme, but also some sense of the intermediate gradation in terms of the strength of people's partisan attachments.

Here is what the responses to that set of questions has looked like in terms of the strength of attachment over the last 50 years. What I'm showing you here is the percentages of people who classify themselves as strong identifiers with either party, weak identifiers and then the people who say that they are Independents or something else, but when you asked them, admit that they are closer to the Republicans or closer to the Democrats. We are calling those leaners.

Then finally, I'm calling pure Independents the people who say they are Independents and decline to say that they are closer to one party or the other.

Well, what does this trend line look like? If you look over the first 15 years or so, you see that it is pretty flat and the level of partisanship is at a pretty high level. Almost 40 percent of the people call themselves strong identifiers with one party or the other and about 75 percent call themselves identifiers either strongly or less strongly.

Then beginning in the early '60s and through the early '70s, there is pretty precipitous decline in the number of both strong and weak identifiers and an increase in the number of Independents, either pure Independents or leaners. That trend generated a huge amount of attention. One of the first people to notice this was David Broder, who

wrote a book published in 1970, I think, called The Party is Over. Lots of political scientists picked up on that idea and by about the middle of the '70s, there was a great deal of academic hand-wringing about the demise of parties and what the road would look like if partisan attachments disappeared entirely and everybody became a pure independent.

Well, when academics get on the bandwagon, you know that it is about to derail. And sure enough, that's what happened. Beginning in the late '70s you see a pretty precipitous, at least, leveling off and maybe increase in the level of partisanship in the electorate. So now, here we are in the early part of the 21st century with levels of partisan identification that are a little bit lower than the levels in the 1950s, but really not a great deal lower than they were then.

The important point here is that there are a lot of people, about 70 percent of the electorate who think of themselves as attached to the Democratic or Republican Party in some enduring way. Why is that important? Well, one way it is important is because it is strongly related to our voting behavior. What I'm showing you here is the pattern of support for Bill Clinton in the 1996 presidential election, as a function of people's party identifications in response to that first question that I showed you.

This is just a share of the two-party vote. So, I'm setting aside here people who voted for Ross Perot or did some other unaccountable thing.

Just look at the choice between Clinton and Dole in 1996. The gray bars in the front, look at the relationship between the party identification these people expressed in 1996 and their vote. You see that a hundred percent of the strong Democrats in this sample voted for Bill Clinton. About three percent of the strong Republicans voted for Bill Clinton and at any level in between, you can get a pretty good

idea of how people are going to vote on the basis of what they say in response to that question about their long-term partisan attachments.

The reason I picked 1996 is, this happened to be a case in which a substantial number of the people who were interviewed by the national elections study in 1996 had previously been interviewed in 1992 and had been asked the same question.

So, these darker bars in the background, look at the vote for Clinton in 1996 as a function of the party attachments that people expressed in 1992 before Bob Dole appeared as a candidate, before the budget shut-down, before the health care fiasco, before most of the issues that looked like important issues in the 1996 campaign.

So, for those of you who think that these party attachments are fluctuating in significant ways from week to week, you can see that the relationship between the party identifications that people expressed in 1992 and their voting behavior in 1996 is also very strong with something in the middle '90s of strong Democrats from 1992 sticking with Clinton in 1996 and only about 15 percent of the people who thought of themselves as strong Republicans in 1992 gravitating to the Democratic side four years later.

So, there is, at the individual level, a huge relationship between party identification and the vote. It is a relationship that is sufficiently longstanding that it can't be attributable to people just adopting partisan loyalties as a function of how they intend to vote in the current campaign.

Now, we have looked at the strength of partisan attachments and we have looked at the extent to which those partisan attachments influence people's voting behavior. It is kind of convenient to put those two pieces together. What I have done

here is to compute an index that I call partisan voting, which combines those two features.

What it does basically is ask how many people are there in each partisan group and what is the voting behavior of that partisan group by comparison with the voting behavior of people who are pure Independents. This scale has a maximum value of 50. If you think about everyone being a Republican or a Democrat and voting for the candidate of that party, the maximum value you could possibly get would be a 50.

The actual values are on the order of 30 or 35 most times. So, that gives you some sense of the strength of partisanship in shaping people's voting behavior. You can think of this as moving people, something like 30 or 35 percentage points away from what they would do if they really were all pure Independents.

How does the level of partisan voting change? Well, in presidential elections you see a fairly high, consistent level through the middle '60, a kind of dip in 1964, as a fair number of Republicans abandoned Goldwater, a bigger dip in 1972, as a fair number of Democrats abandoned McGovern. Again, a low point around the mid-'70s that corresponds to the hand-wringing about the demise of partisanship, but then a fairly consistent and substantial increase in the partisan voting index over the last 30 years or so.

In the recent elections, you see a level of partisan voting that is actually a good deal higher than it was in the heyday of the 1950s. So, at the presidential level, we seem to have a pattern of partisanship in voting behavior that is greater than at any point in which the surveys have been conducted and based on historical analysis, I think probably greater than at any time since about the turn of the last century.

In congressional elections, you see a somewhat different pattern, but there are some similarities. Again, a pretty high and consistent level through the 1950s, a fairly substantial and more gradual decline through the '60s and the first half of the '70s corresponding to the period in which incumbent members of Congress really began to entrench themselves and develop possibilities to win reelection on a routine basis regardless of the partisan loyalties of their constituents.

But then, again, in the mid-'70s, a turn around with some roughness from year to year, a pretty consistent increase in the level of partisan voting through the last 30 years or so. Not as high a level as in presidential elections, not to as high a level as in the congressional elections of the 1950s, before partisan advantage became as strong as it is now, but still a pretty significant turn around.

So, these partisan attachments have a big impact on voting behavior. They also--and this is part of the explanation for why they have a big impact on voting behavior--have a big impact on lots of other aspects of people's perceptions of the political world.

If you ask people how the war in Iraq is going, their responses will be conditioned very strongly by their partisan loyalties. If you ask them who really won the 2000 election, their responses will be conditioned very strongly by their partisan loyalties. If you ask them whether a particular presidential candidate is smart or a strong leader, their responses will be strongly conditioned by that. If you ask them about particular policies and whether they are sensible policies or not, their responses will sometimes fluctuate pretty dramatically depending upon the president they are associated with and the party they are associated with.

So, lots of Republicans, for example, became big fans of wage and price controls in the early 1970s, once Richard Nixon adopted them as policy.

My favorite example, though, is the one that I'm showing you here from the 1988 national election study survey, where they ask people some questions about how things had gone over the past eight years, over the time that Ronald Reagan had been president. One of the things they asked them was whether unemployment had gotten better or worse. They asked them whether inflation had gotten better or worse.

The correct answers to those questions is that unemployment declined pretty significantly over Reagan's eight years and inflation declined dramatically, by more than two-thirds over the time that Reagan had been in office.

But as you can see from these distributions and responses, most Democrats didn't get that news. About 20 percent of strong Democrats said that the inflation problem had gotten much better or somewhat better. About 60 percent said that it had gotten much worse or somewhat worse. You can see by the steepness of these curves that there are very substantial differences in response to what seems like a pretty objective question about how the world is going, depending upon these partisan attachments that people have.

So, all of that suggests that we ought to care some what this distribution of partisan loyalties looks like in the electorate. So, I have given you a few pictures of that, what I think is not in your handout.

This simply tracks the partisan balance of Democratic and Republican loyalties. So, I'm just looking at the difference in the percentage of people who call themselves Democrats and people who call themselves Republicans in the 1950s to 2000.

You see here a pretty gradual decline in the Democratic advantage in partisanship over this period and a pretty consistent difference between voters and non-voters. Non-voters are consistently more Democratic in their predispositions than voters are.

Well, where is that decline in Democratic partisanship coming from? This one I think you do have in your handout. This is exactly the same picture, but distinguishing between people in the south and in other parts of the country. You see what has happened is that, in other parts of the country, although there has been some fluctuation over time, the overall partisan balance between Democrats and Republicans is really not much different now than it was in the beginning of the series, in the 1950s.

What has happened is that, southerners who were overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic Party at the beginning of this period have gradually over the entire 50-year period really become much more evenly balanced in their partisan loyalties. So, now there is really very little difference in overall partisanship between southerners and non-southerners.

Of course, you have to bear in mind that these pictures include both African-Americans and white voters. So, if you looked at southern whites separately, which is for many purposes a sensible thing to do, you would see that they have actually become more Republican than the electorate. Since African-Americans are very overwhelmingly Democratic, that helps to balance things out and leaves current partisan balance in the south really pretty similar to what it looks like in the rest of the country.

The other trend line I have produced here--this is my Tom Mann memorial overhead, because Tom and I had talked about this a little bit a couple of months ago. The partisan balance by income class, there has been lots of talk about

what is wrong with Kansas and how it is that these lower class voters in the south have gotten distracted from their economic interests and support Republicans increasingly on the basis of social issues of one kind or another.

There certainly are instances of that. If you look at the overall pattern of partisan loyalties by dividing people into the bottom, middle and upper third of the income distribution, you see that the Democrats have really done a quite good job over the years of maintaining their partisan advantage among people in the bottom third of the income distribution. There has been some erosion among the middle class, but the most significant erosion has been among people in the upper third of the income distribution who were, on balance, more likely to be Democrats than Republicans in the 1950s and '60s, but in recent years, have been consistently more Republican than Democratic.

So, if you look at the overall pattern here, you see one of the things that has happened is that the class differences have widened. People talk about the United States being a nation in which electoral politics isn't much dominated by class issues they way it is in may European countries. That was certainly true in the 1950s. It's significantly less true now than it was then and it looks from this picture as though the Democrats' problem, to the extent that they have a problem, is mostly at the top of the income distribution, rather than at the bottom of the income distribution, which I think confounds some typical interpretations of how contemporary politics works.

The other point you notice here is, in the overall scheme of things, the partisan balance between Republicans and Democrats is really pretty even at the moment. In fact, if you go back to the picture, the overall distribution, if you look at voters only, you will see that there is a slight, pretty consistent advantage for Democrats in the recent years.

If you take into account the fact that Republicans identifiers are a little more loyal in their voting behavior than Democrats are typically and take into account the fact that Independents are typically a little bit more likely to support Republican presidential candidates than Democrats, this implies that there really is, in effective terms, a very even partisan balance in the country at the moment.

So, I hope this will set the stage for our discussion of where this partisanship comes from; what kinds of effects it has on various kinds of political behavior; how we ought to think about it in the context of the current campaign.

Thanks.

MR. MANN: All right, Larry, thank you very much for that clear and cogent presentation on partisanship.

I'd like to begin our conversation--and it is going to be free-wheeling here. So, just feel free to jump in whenever the moment strikes you.

I'd like us to get a sense of how stable partisan attachments are. I say that, having looked at Larry's charts. Clearly, there are gradual changes over time in the commitments, the identifications with the Democratic and Republican Parties.

The question is, if one were to look at shorter term periods, say, within election cycles, how much variation occurs? Is party partly a reflection of short-term responses to events as well as longer term attachments? Might that help us shed some light on the polling story I began with earlier?

To get that conversation going, I was going to ask Don Green, who has published a book called Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and Social Identities of Voters, if he could give us a sense of how partisan attachments develop and change over time.

PROFESSOR GREEN: That sounds fine.

Let me begin by saying just a few words about what we mean by party identification, to amplify some of the things Larry said earlier. Now, there are different perspectives on party identification. One of the classic perspectives views it as a longstanding attachment, a kind of psychological attachment, a sense of self-conception as opposed to a kind of momentary sense of whom one is likely to vote for in the weeks ahead.

With that kind of conception, I think it is important, as you reflect on it to have a clear distinction between a Democrat as a person who thinks of himself or herself as part of a social group called Democrats as opposed to someone who may or may not have that attachment, but votes in that way.

So, imagine that you have--you are walking down a hall and there is a cocktail party full of Democrats. Your mind conjures up a social stereotype. What do those people look like? You can sort of imagine what they look like. On the other side of the hall, there is a cocktail party full of Republicans. You visualize them.

Which one is filled with the people that you most closely identify with, not necessarily the people you would agree with were you to talk policy with them. Which group most closely reflects your own sense of group self-conceptions? Which ones would you like to have your sons and daughters marry or something like that?

When in viewed in that way as opposed to a kind of momentary tally of your policy stances, it is not hard to understand--well, two things, one having to do with conceptualization and one having to do with measurement. Conceptualization, I think it makes it a lot easier to understand why party identification tends to move sluggishly over time. Those kinds of self-conceptions, like other forms of self-conception, whether

they be ethnic or religious, tend to evolve very slowly over time and tend to change largely in response to our changing social environment.

The other point to be made with respect to measurement is that, one has to be careful in reading polls such as the Gallup Poll which asks a very different question about party identification. Instead of asking in general when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent or what, they ask in politics as of today, do you think of yourself as a blah, blah, blah. That, of course, frames it in a very different way. It is much more likely to pick up these kinds of short-term partisan fluctuations.

That said, let me segue, I guess, into the next question, perhaps, for Alan, which is, when one is a--when one reads polls, of course, it is a matter of letting the buyer beware. Of course, polls can fluctuate all over the place for reasons having to do with sampling error or just problems in the way the sample is drawn from case to the other and changes in the technology of polling or the way in which samples are drawn, the way in which questions are framed, the context, the order. It can all throw off the comparability of [inaudible] from one point to the next.

That said, it is important when sort of assessing the stability of partisanship to allude to the kind of data that Larry had mentioned earlier where you are interviewing the same people over time. When you interview the same people over time, it is often astonishing how stable their responses are.

It is true that people answer questions very casually and might be flippant and say, I'm an Independent when, in fact, they are really a closet Democrat. But I think when you triangulate in on their true partisan self-conception with multiple questions of

the sort that I have described, it really is remarkable how stable an individual's partisanship is over very long periods of time.

DR. MANN: Alan, let's hand the baton to you and pick up on this and your insights into reading the polls in the last couple of weeks and months.

DR. ABRAMOWITZ: Right.

Well, one thing I've learned in the past couple of weeks from having been involved in a series of e-mail exchanges with a bunch of fellow academics and some pollsters and political practitioners is that, the view of partisanship in the American electorate, its role in shaping voting behavior, its stability to my surprise is very different among most political scientists today from what it is among these practitioners or, at least, some of them.

There seems to be a very common view among many of the pollsters that party identification is something that is much more ephemeral than the way we view it. That it is something that can fluctuate quite dramatically even during the course of a single election campaign, in fact, even according to the Gallup Poll if you read it over the course of, say, a week. The distribution of party identification can fluctuate quite dramatically.

This has very important implications, I think, for the way we interpret these polls. If one looks at some of the recent national polls and the quite diverse results that they are showing, ranging from a dead even race in the past, just within the past few days to a very substantial Bush lead in the most recent Gallup Polls--Tom mentioned, Bush is ahead by 13 points, I believe, among likely voters. It really raises some questions about what is going on here and if you start to look a little bit more closely at

these polls, one of the things that you discover it that there is also quite a substantial variation in the partisan composition of their samples.

This has partly to do with the difference between likely and registered voters, especially in the case of the Gallup Poll. The Gallup Poll's likely voter screen seems to particularly produce at certain times--not always--but at certain times a significant difference in the parts and composition of their registered and likely voter samples.

In their first post-convention poll, for example, the one that came out just about two weeks ago, that I think had a major impact on the tone of media coverage of the election, they showed that George Bush had a seven point lead over Kerry among likely voters. They also showed another statistic that received much less attention, which was that Bush had a one point lead over Kerry among likely voters--among registered voters, among all registered voters, a six point difference.

Even in their current poll they have Bush with an eight point lead among registered voters and a 13 or 14 point lead among so-called likely voters. Most other polls did not show that big a discrepancy between registered and likely voters.
I there are reasons to be skeptical about that.

If you go back and look at the Gallup tracking poll in 2000, some of you may recall that it just gyrated wildly at times during the course of the campaign going, for example, from an 11 point Gore lead to an eight point Bush lead in three days at one point. Ten days before the 2000 presidential election, the Gallup tracking poll had Bush leading Gore by 13 points. That's ten days before the presidential election.

So, I think there is some reason to be skeptical about what is going on there.

Beyond that, even their registered voter sample and some other polls' registered voter samples are showing in recent weeks--not all of them, but some of the polls are showing a fairly substantial Republican identification advantage. Now, I think we should be somewhat skeptical about this.

For example, in the current Gallup Poll, going into the internals of their poll and delving into them, which is not the easiest thing to do--if you go to their website, it is a little bit hard to find the information, but some of it is there.

Their current registered voter sample appears to have about a six point Republican advantage in party identification. Their likely voter sample clearly has a substantially larger Republican advantage. It is hard to tell exactly what it is, but I'm going to just guesstimate that it is somewhere in the vicinity of a ten to 14 point Republican identification advantage among their so-called likely voters.

The reasons for being a little bit skeptical about this are that, in the last four presidential elections, the percentage of--the relative proportion of Democrats and Republicans among the actual voters, based on the national exit polls has varied almost not at all. In the last four presidential elections, there has been a very consistent Democratic advantage ranging from three to five points.

We are talking about 1988, '92, '96 and 2004 elections have produced very different results with close elections, one-sided elections, strong votes for Independent candidates and much smaller votes for Independent candidates. Yet, despite these fluctuations in the outcomes, proportions of Democrats, Republicans and Independents hardly varied at all. Yet, some of these polls are telling us now that we can expect to see in the 2004 election a substantial Republican advantage in party identification.

Based on everything that Larry talked about and, I think, almost everything we know about the nature of party identification, I think that that is extraordinarily unlikely. I think it has very important implications for the way we read these polls, because party identification has such a powerful influence on the vote.

In the 2000 election, about 90 percent of partisans voted for their own party's presidential candidate. Most of the recent polls show something similar. Even in the current Gallup Poll, 94 percent of Republicans are supporting Bush, but 85 percent of Democrats are supporting Kerry and that 85 percent is actually a low figure relative to some other polls and relative to some of the earlier Gallup Polls.

So, I would say, based on the way most political scientists understand partisanship, its stability over time and its impact on voting behavior, that raises some real questions about some of the recent poll results.

MR. MANN: Alan, you are really raising questions about both volatility of the party measure--

DR. ABRAMOWITZ: Right.

MR. MANN: --because in earlier periods in the cycle, there were times when I think in Gallup--

DR. ABRAMOWITZ: That's right.

MR. MANN: --showing a large, a substantial Kerry lead, that there was, if you will, a partisan bias in favor of the Democrats.

DR. ABRAMOWITZ: That's right.

MR. MANN: The last couple have seemed to be the other direction. So, it is both volatility and then the question of bias at a particular point.

John?

MR. HARWOOD: I just wanted to make a couple of macro points about Tom's first question about the stability of partisan identification and then some points relative to the current situation. On the macro point, you look at the data that Larry was presenting. It seems to me that, party ID is reasonably stable now, more so than it has been in the past, because you have had essentially a realignment mostly in the south that has aligned people's partisanship with their ideology. So, I took a little political science in college. I know the word cross-pressure.

[Laughter]

MR. HARWOOD: There are fewer people cross-pressured by partisanship and ideology. That is, conservative Democrats in the south who try to figure out whether they vote their party or they vote their philosophy for president. So, it seems to me that, you have people who have a lot of information now about what party stands for; that the two parties are more coherent in what they stand for. There is less variation election to election in what it is to be the Republican nominee, in what it is to be the Democrat nominee.

If you are pro-choice, if the environment is a big issue for you, if are worried about the income distribution, you're likely to be a Democrat. If you care about, if you are upset about gay marriage and high taxes and certain other, you know, small business regulation, you are going to be a Republican. Those things, it seems to me, are pretty stable.

It explains why you have such a high correspondence now between your party ID and what your vote is. So, it raises the stakes in all these debates about polling, because if you change the partisan balance of a poll, you're taking numbers right off the top from either candidate and putting them on the other side.

This is relevant to this discussion of the Andy Kohut Pew Poll, which I have been carrying on a discussion with interested parties even up on this podium on my blackberry, because there are a lot of stakes in the argument. Each campaign, it is important to them to be seen as up, because, as we have seen since the Republican Convention, when Bush is up significantly, all of a sudden Democrats sort of abetted by the press coverage are sort of portrayed as a bunch of morons who don't know what they are doing and it sows sort of confusion, raises confidence on the other side and actually has a political effect.

All those Democrats looked a lot less stupid when Iraq was up and Kerry's numbers evens up, which appears to be happening now.

But on the Pew Poll, Andy Kohut had two flights in this poll. The first flight showed 52/40 Bush. The second flight, that was September 8th through the 10th. The second flight showed 46/46 tied. In the first flight, the partisan split in the poll was 35 percent Republican, 33 percent Democrat. So, it was plus two Republican.

The second flight was 37 percent Democrat, 33 percent Republican. So, Republicans were down two and Democrats were up four. That could be seen to account for a lot of the shift on the ballot.

Now, here is the issue. Is that, does that show that the samples were off or because party ID if you ask somebody about it, can be seen as an attitude and not a characteristic? Is it something that simply changed, because people this week, because of Iraq and guard story and all that, are more anti-Bush and pro-Kerry? Therefore, they are going to say that they are more Democratic and less Republican.

The Bush campaign people I have been talking to have been complaining about the composition of the samples and saying that the ideal thing for you to do is to

find a characteristic you can measure like party registration. That is a fact about somebody. It is not something that they say. But on a national sample, you can't do that, because there isn't national party registration that is consistent all over the place.

So, I don't know what the right answer is. You know, the purist, academic position is that you do not weight by party identification, because it is an attitude. However, people who do campaigns think it is practical sometimes to compensate in some way. I don't know how you do compensate.

MR. MANN: But there are some polls that do weight by party identification now. In the Zogby Polls, the best known ones, Zogby has it predetermined basically, although he may play around with it a little bit. You're never quite sure what he is doing, but he starts out with an assumption that the electorate is going to look basically like the electorate did last time. He is weighting his poll results based on that.

MR. : Terence does the same thing. It is controversial.

MR. : Right.

MR. : A lot of pollsters criticize that and say it's just not appropriate.

MR. : And as a result, what it does is it makes your results much more stable over time than polls that don't do that.

MR. MANN: Don, what is your sense? You intimated that the measurement itself may have some bearing here. That is, the Gallup asks the party identification question differently than the NES study. In general, what is your view about this? Is there fluctuation that is meaningful over short periods of time that reflect real developments in the campaign and in the public's reaction to it, or do you get differential refusal rates among people depending on what is happening--by chance or

because of some systematic events? What should we make of this? And do you have any general sense of whether the results should be somehow discounted by the distribution of partisans in the sample?

PROFESSOR GREEN: The partisan hearts and minds look at, I think, more than 500 Gallup Polls and at least 100 CBS Polls. The reason to pick those is that, Gallup uses the politics as of today wording. CBS uses the in general when it comes to politics wording and tracks them from 1976 to the present.

It finds more volatility in the Gallup Poll. It also finds more responsiveness to presidential approval, to economic confidence and other kinds of short-term measures, suggesting that when people are asked this politics as of today measure, they are more likely to factor in things that have happened in the last week or, perhaps, more to the point, more likely to factor in the things that they have been asked about in the questions leading up to the party identification question, because for some reason, that tends to come toward the end of a lot of these surveys.

A lot of the surveys will more or less conclude with now I'm going to ask you some questions for background classification purposes. What is your party? In my way of thinking, that should be asked first, before you condition people to think about the sleight of candidates that they will be facing.

I think that the kinds of concerns that are being raised are, in some sense, a layer of concern above the abysmal--you know, on the general concern about the abysmal state of phone surveying these days with very, very low response rates. With the advent of caller ID, the advent of cell phones, it becomes a very, very difficult enterprise to take surveys.

MR. MANN: Larry, two questions. One, I remember from your charts that Independents who say they lean toward one party or the other seem to have as strong or stronger a pattern of party voting as weak partisans. Yet, in most of the polling organization results, Independents are all put together, and they only look at, in effect, strong and weak partisans. Perhaps they do that because the number of pure Independents is so small they could never report it.

It may be there are some compensating changes going on among Independent leaners in the sample, too, that would help us get to the bottom of this. But could tell us something about the Independent leaners and how we should think of them in partisan terms?

Then if you would follow up on John's point about the ideological sorting by party that seems to have taken place over time and how we need to take that into account to understand contemporary partisanship.

PROFESSOR BARTELS: Yes, these partisan leaners are a king of problematic category from a conceptual point of view, because they consist in part of people who are really, for all practical purposes, partisans. But because of changes in verbal fashion beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, decided that they did not want to call themselves Democrats or Republicans, even though they behaved much as the people who are real Democratic and Republican identifiers behave. So, there are a lot of those people in that category and that helps to account for the fact that their support of the party's candidates is really about as consistent as the support of many of the partisan identifiers.

On the other hand, there are also some people in that category who do reflect the fact that this partisanship is responsive to some degree to short-term forces

and especially that follow up question that has more of the character of the as of today question, because it says do you feel closer to the Democrats or the Republicans. Well, yeah, today I am about to vote for a Republican candidate. So, I feel closer to the Republicans. That kind of response tends to be a little bit more responsive to these short-term forces.

In situations where you can separate out the short-term fluctuation from the long term, for example, by going back and seeing how they responded to the partisanship question months or years earlier, it turns out that the, in a sense, the actual loyalty rate of the partisan leaners is still pretty substantial, but not as great as for the partisan identifiers. Part of that apparent consistency does have to do with the short term response kind of bias.

MR. MANN: Just stop there. John wanted to ask a question.

MR. HARWOOD: I just want to jump in. I think that's really interesting, because in our poll, the point you made, Tom, is what we find. The number of pure Independents is quite small. I don't know analytically, looking at a set of data, you know, is the right way to think of this as a big group of Independents or a small group of Independents and a big group of partisans.

I also wonder whether or not what Larry just said reconciles two things that always seem not to make sense to me at the same time. One, that the parties were becoming coherent and voters were becoming more partisan in how they approached political choices. But also, in many states where it is permitted to register Independent or, like in California, they call it decline to state, everybody sees those numbers going way up. So, why is that? If people are getting more partisan, why is decline to state going up.

It may be because it has become the politically correct thing to say, I'm not attached to a party, even though attitudinally if you really bored down a little bit, you would find that most of those people were partisan.

MR. : Yes, the idea with these questions about partisanship is really to avoid confounding the sense of psychological or social attachment or loyalty that people have from specific behaviors, including not only voting, but also registering as a member of a party or joining a party in some official capacity. That is partly because there are huge variations from place to place in political institutions that make it more or less attractive for people to register as members of parties or as Independents. It often affects whether you can vote in primaries, under what circumstances and that kind of thing.

MR. : New Hampshire, for example, has a huge proportion of registered Independents or decline to state--I forget what they call them. That is because, I think, in New Hampshire, if you are an Independent, you can vote in either party's primary. But if you are a registered Democrat, you can only vote in the Democratic primary and registered Republicans, only in the Republican primary.

Well, why register as a Republican or Democrat? Why not leave yourself the option of deciding each year which primary you are going to vote in.

MR. : Yeah.

MR. HARWOOD: By the way, if I could just add as a reporter, the thing reporters hear like more often than anything else when you talk to actual voters is, you know, are you a Democrat or Republican. They will say, well, I vote the person, not the party. Then you say, okay, well, have you ever voted for a Democrat for president? And it's like, well, yeah, John Kennedy in 1964.

[Laughter]

MR. HARWOOD: People act in different ways than they describe.

MR. MANN: Larry, please go ahead.

MR. : A lot of survey research is acting as though there is only one question you can ask. You never ask two questions on partisanship. Some surveys have boldly asked multiple questions about partisanship, often separated by, say, 15 minutes.

What you find is, if you add people with more and more questions about, well, do you have an identification with the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, come back to them; you know, in general do you think of yourself, do you ever think of yourself as one of the other. You can basically take that group of people who initially say they are Independents and whittle down to about ten percent of the group of pure Independents who could never--

MR. : And the pollsters have no hesitation about nagging people to get their candidate preference. The Gallup Poll, you know, they really push people hard. Well, do you lean to somebody? Do you have a slight preference for somebody? If you absolutely had to make a decision right now and that's how they get it down to where in the Gallup Poll right now, I think there are two or three percent undecided. That's not the initial result.

MR. : If you could also short cut it by saying, if you want to do it indirectly by saying are you pro-choice or anti-abortion. That will get you a hell of a long way there.

[Laughter]

MR. MANN: Have we looked at panel data for Independent leaners, and does that give us a hint as to the extent to which that is a kind of relatively stable

identification, that is comfort with the Independent label but the leaning capturing a real partisan attachment? Or is it more subject to short term fluctuations?

PROFESSOR BARTELS: The picture that I showed you here for the presidential voting in 1996, I think, speaks to this. If you look at those black lines in the background, the people who are classified for that purpose as being Republican or Democratic leaners are the people who said that they lean toward one party or the other in 1992. Now, we are going back to them four years later to see how they voted.

It looks as though the Democratic leaners from 1992 voted for Clinton in the high 80 percent and the Republican leaners voted for Dole in the sort of low to mid-30 percent. So, there is a good deal of consistency in their behavior although somewhat less by that measure than if you ask them at the moment which side they feel closer to.

MR. MANN: So, that answers that.

The second part of the question was the ideological sorting by party that John had brought up. You were going to say something about that.

PROFESSOR BARTELS: Yeah, there has been a lot of talk about political polarization. I think it has to do partly with this pattern that I showed you; that the partisan composition of the electorate is an increasingly good predictor of voting behavior. But it also has to do with changes in the packages of issue positions that people take and express.

The polarization really doesn't, as best we can tell, have very much to do with increasing diversity in views in the electorate as a whole. Morris Fiorina at Stanford has just published a book that tries to make that argument, that there isn't a culture war in which people are increasingly extreme in their views on one side or the other of social and moral issues.

What has happened is that, people have sorted themselves increasingly so that the people who say they are Democrats are much more likely to take a consistent set of liberal positions on a variety of different issues. The people who say that they are Republicans increasingly take a much more consistent set of conservative positions on a variety of different issues.

Now, there are two ways to account for that. One is that people have these ideological views and adopt a partisan attachment that is consistent with them. The other is that their partisan attachment influences their views about specific issues. Clearly, there is a good deal of both of those things going on. There is some controversy in the literature about the relative preponderance of one versus the other.

I know Alan has done some important work looking at the impact of ideology on changes in people's partisanship. On the other hand, Warren Miller and, more recently, Paul Gordon at Arizona State have done work using these panel surveys where you talk to the same people over time and finding, for example, that their party identification is more likely to be a cause than an effect of attitudes about pretty basic kinds of issues like moral traditionalism or attitudes about equality.

So, things are certainly going in both ways, but the net effect has been to increase substantially the ideological consistency of the party camps in the electorate in much the same way that we have seen at the elite level in Congress as well.

MR. : I'd like to speak to--I agree with that completely. I do think that among certain groups in the electorate where we have seen over a long period of time a fairly substantial shift in the partisan balance [sic]. And this is very different from saying that we see fluctuations in the party identification on a week to week or

month to month or even year to year basis, but rather over a period of decades, that we do see fairly dramatic changes.

One group, obviously, we have already talked about white southerners who gone from an overwhelmingly Democratic group to a predominantly Republican group. Another group are Catholic voters actually who have gone from a very heavily Democratic group now to one where there is a fairly even balance in party identification.

In terms of what is driving this change, I argue that I think that ideology has a great deal to do with it. I wouldn't argue that that is the only thing going on here. If you look, for example, at the trend in ideological identification versus party identification over time, what you find for both of these groups basically is that, there has been almost no change in the ideological identification. That white southerners are no more conservative now than they were 30 or 40 or 50 years ago.

Well, we don't know about 50 years ago, because the NES didn't think about asking the question then.

There has been very little change since 1972 when the NES started asking an ideological identification question. White southerners have remained very stable in terms of their ideological identification, but their party identification has been steadily tracking upward in terms of a Republican identification. You find that, in fact, all this change or a vast majority of it is taking place among conservative white southerners. Those who label themselves conservative have changed dramatically and the smaller group that label themselves liberal have become more Democratic over time. The same thing is true among Catholics by and large.

MR. MANN: John and then Don.

MR. HARWOOD: I was just going to make one quick point on the polarization. I think what Mo Fiorina has said makes a lot of sense to me. One of the things that I found in interacting with readers or even editors of the paper will write about polarization and the word itself sort of makes it, sort of conjures up the idea of some sort of bitter fight. That often times does not ring true to people in terms of their own lives, especially outside of Washington where people's livelihoods don't depend on politics.

I think of it as not a--I think David Broder wrote in a column one time, the nation isn't deeply divided, but shallowly divided. I think that makes sense. I think of the parties as kind of like magnets. There are a certain group of people who are very powerfully attached and attracted to the magnet and then there are a lot of other people who have like a vague charge attached to them and much weaker attachment. Nevertheless, it is consistent and something has to overturn it.

MR. MANN: Don.

PROFESSOR GREEN: I just wanted to jump in. A couple of things with respect to this ideological polarization. I think that it is true, as Larry and Alan have said, that over time, the parties have become more ideologically homogeneous both in terms of their legislative delegations and in terms of their mass support. I have a somewhat different interpretation from Alan in that, I don't think that it has been the case that over time people have had well-formed ideologies and have gravitated to the party that is ideologically comfortable to them.

My interpretation is somewhat different. I think that over time, if you follow, say, conservative Christians, you will notice that in the early 1970s, their leaders were saying, you know, politics is a dirty business. You have to stay out of it. But by

the end of the 1970s, in particular out of kind of disappointment with Carter, these leaders were saying to these groups, you know, actually the Republican Party is for us.

After beating the drum steadily, by the end of the 1970s, early 1980s through the end of the 1980s, you see a dramatic shift in the social orientation of those groups. The stereotypes of the parties changed concomitantly. All of a sudden, Republicans have southern faces and you have Trent Lott and Newt Gingrich and a litany of others who by their provenance, changed the social stereotype associated with the Republican Party.

Before then, as Congress notes in the 1960s, it was the Democratic Party that was the party of middle class respectability. They had changed that by the end of the 1980s. So, it is not surprising that a lot of these groups trundle along with them.

At the same time, groups like Catholics are becoming--their own self-conception as Catholics is diminishing in its political salience. You know, no longer are we having our politics in the days of rum, Romanism and revolution associated with Catholics in the Democratic Party. In fact, the racial politics of this country have put Irish Catholics and Italian Catholics more or less in the same ethnic category with other sort of generic whites. The country has polarized its ethnic politics in a fundamentally different way than would have been seen, say, in the 1950s or 1930s.

So, I think that we can understand a lot of these drifts.

I think in terms of social group identification, as opposed to implying that the typical American voter really thinks hard about the policy configuration of the party, their platforms and their kind of spatial proximity to them--

MR. : Let me, let me, Don, let me see--

MR. : [Simultaneous discussion] very quickly on that.

MR. : Yes.

MR. : I don't think they have to think very hard, because I think the cues are just much clearer now. I don't totally disagree with what you're saying. I think that is part of what is going on here.

Even if you look at evangelical protestants in the last 20 years, there are some liberal evangelical protestants and they haven't realigned at all. They have become more Democratic. Only those who describe themselves as conservative have shifted dramatically toward the Republicans.

So, what I'm saying is, within almost all of these groups, if you sort them by ideology, ideology seems to have a much, much more predictive power in terms of where people end up in terms of partisanship. It is not that they have coherent ideologies and they are thinking about politics a lot and they are paying a great deal of attention. It is that the cues are much more, I think, easy for people to pick up right now.

MR. MANN: John.

MR. HARWOOD: I think the point on self-conception that you were making is really interesting. I was having a debate, a discussion really with Republicans at their convention about the choice of Zell Miller as the keynote speech. My initial reaction was, why in the world would they make Zell Miller the keynote speaker? Every southern, white conservative on the planet is already voting Republican. Why does that help them by putting them out?

One of these Bush people was saying, no, there is still a significant number of conservative Democrats in the south and also in some other places who still feel like they need some sort of cue or permission to go vote Republican. That surprised

me, but obviously their campaign believes it, because Zell Miller is going to Ohio and other places with Bush.

MR. MANN: I wanted to see if Don would accept a friendly amendment and maybe bring Alan in as well. That is, thinking about this question, it's helpful to realize the public does not simply exist in a vacuum apart from the elected officials and the leaders and the elites. In fact, it is the latter that are providing the stimuli that helped form the social attachments over time and the psychological identification. So, what you have is a dynamic process. We seldom know where it begins.

We think this long sort of regional realignment began with the Voting Rights Act, but there is no question that, as a party through its presidential candidate or president, changes its platform, its image, its message that it is sending signals in turn to an electorate that then begins to divide itself differently and attach itself differently. Certainly, one has to give credit to Ronald Reagan in the combination of economic, social, and foreign policy messages that helped people to begin to align themselves.

MR. : But you can see the beginnings of this in Dwight Eisenhower's elections in the 1950s as well. I think it goes to your point about the choice of a nominee sends a different cue and you started seeing different voting patterns in the south.

MR. MANN: Exactly.

The one thing that we have seen since the '50s with the studies by Herbie McClosky and company is that it has always been the case that elected officials have the most consistent views embracing, if you will, the party positions. The other activists, like convention delegates, are close to them, and then party identifiers in the public less so, and then the general public less so. That is a pattern that is reported at every

convention, and it has never changed. But the content changes of what they are uniting behind.

It seems to me, that has to shape the way in which this sorting occurs over time.

MR. : Except they are much more polarized now than they were then.

MR. : Yes, I think it would, with one small proviso. When you have a candidate and it becomes clear that some members of the party's constituency are disaffected, the elites in a given group are disaffected, I think that the voters can take some cues about that. My group is unhappy with this candidate. Perhaps, my group has somewhat whittled away the strength of its attachment to this thing called Democrats.

MR. MANN: Let me pose a question to you. If partisanship is so strong, how is it that Democrats get elected statewide on a regular basis in North Dakota and South Dakota, states that are overwhelmingly Republican? How is it that Ross Perot, even after he engages in erratic behavior, gets 19 percent of the popular vote in a presidential election? How is it that an Independent candidate, Jessie Ventura, can win an election?

Is the partisanship such in the electorate that with the right conditions and a different kind of candidate pitch or appeal that candidates can overcome that? Does that suggest potential for change? If we set aside institutional constraints on minor party candidates, perhaps there is more room in the system than would be suggested by our discussion of partisanship.

John?

MR. HARWOOD: Well, on the first part of your question on South Dakota, it seems to me the answer is fairly simple. People adapt to their environment and the kind of partisanship that we are talking about, as it is played out in a presidential campaign, is not the same as the kind of partisanship as is played out in the terrain of a state election in South Dakota.

So, if you are born and raised in South Dakota, you are going to adjust yourself or just naturally--it's not even an adjustment process--you're going to be raised differently than if you were a Democrat raised in Massachusetts.

You know, Bush had this line in his acceptance speech where he says, you know, some of you think I swagger a little bit. In Texas, we call that walking. Well, in Texas, Democrats walk, too. So, they learn the same thing.

Now, over time, it may be that you get to an equilibrium point or a reconciling between state and national partisanship, but I still think there is a lot of indigenous culture that the local party people, like Republicans and Bill and Weld in Massachusetts or whatever adapt to and can get elected.

PROFESSOR Abramowitz: I've actually gotten the table and one of the handouts that you should have gotten that speaks to this is the very last page of the handout. It starts out--the first page has a lot of numbers on it, but the last page, the one [unintell], table 8--. What this shows is just the breakdown of the current Senate based on the partisan orientation of the state, which is in turn based the presidential vote in 2000. You can see clearly that there is slippage here. But on the other hand, you can also see that there is a pretty clear association between the presidential partisanship and the party of the senator.

So, that among the--in the 22 states in which Al Gore got 55 percent or more of the major party vote, there are 20 Democratic senators and only two Republicans, one of those being the guy from Illinois [inaudible]. So, about 21 and one, I think. Whereas, in the 38 states where Bush got at least 55 percent of the major party vote, there are 28 Republicans and ten Democrats. So, a pretty sizeable Republican advantage.

Now, the difference, obviously, what is kind of interesting here is that, there are a lot more Democrats in these states that voted for, pretty solidly for Bush than there are Republicans in states that voted pretty solidly for Gore.

MR. MANN: So, there is an increasing convergence between presidential and congressional voting over time, but there remains sufficient variation to allow a Democrat to get elected in a Republican-leaning state or district and for, even under unusual circumstances, an Independent candidate to actually draw a substantial number of votes. Is that a reasonable--

PROFESSOR BARTELS: Yes. The previous table shows the same thing for the House--

MR. MANN: For the House, exactly.

PROFESSOR BARTELS: --[simultaneous discussion] see a similar pattern. If anything, it is a little bit stronger.

MR. : You'd expect more slippage for gubernatorial voting, because the issues there are often ones that aren't very strongly related to the issues that are important in national politics. So, it is probably easier for somebody of the wrong party, quote-unquote, to get elected governor than to get elected senator, because of the kinds of issues that they are likely to be running on.

MR. MANN: Okay, I'm going to pose a final question to our panelists, but in the meantime I want you--we haven't run out of steam, but we are running out of time. So, I'd like you to think about questions you would like to pose. We will have a mic for you.

For the final question, if I could get each of you to reflect, to come back to 2004 and to the role of partisanship. The questions are, one, is there a partisan advantage for Democrats or Republicans in this presidential election? Two, how should we think of so-called swing or floating voters? Are there enough to encourage candidates to devote as much or more attention to them as to mobilizing or turning out their partisan base?

MR. GREEN : My biggest concerns about poll reading has to do with the ability to gauge the electorate on election day or, in some cases, that vote by mail the [inaudible] electorate.

MR. : Right.

MR. GREEN : It actually turns out that this is a huge problem for polling.

But [unintell] to say that, if there is a massive gap between registered voters and likely voters, then the challenge is clear to the parties and kindred organizations. That to win, they will need to work as hard as possible during the last few days or, in some cases, during the early voting phase in order to get their stalwarts to the polls. I think one of the slides that Larry slowed speaks [unintell] to this question of the partisanship of the electorate. You have to remember that, partisans are more likely than Independents to turn out. So, the actual voting electorate is even more partisan than the regular public.

So, I think that the number of genuine swing voters is relatively small in comparison, perhaps, to other elections. I think at the same time the thing that separates the 2004 election from previous elections is the overwhelming emphasis on voter mobilization as opposed to persuasion in terms of the grand strategy of both campaigns.

MR. MANN: Larry.

PROFESSOR BARTELS: Political scientists are always offended by the extent to which politics and political journalism seems to be dominated by fads and enthusiasms at any given moment. The enthusiasm of the last couple of years is this idea that there are no undecided voters left; that everyone is polarized and all you can do is turn them out rather than trying to convince anyone in the middle.

Well, if you look at those pictures that I showed you, this is a trend that has been occurring over the last 20 or 30 years. It is not something that happened in the last two years or the last four years. But it has just become a kind of popular idea.

As a result, I think consultants and political strategists have overreacted to the change by trying to invent strategies to mobilize people, rather than to persuade the people who are still left in the middle. If that was a sensible thing to do now, it was certainly a sensible thing to have done four years ago and eight years ago when they weren't doing nearly as much of it.

I think the answer really is that, they have to do some of both. The important strategic point to keep in mind though is that convincing somebody to come out and vote for your guy who otherwise wouldn't vote, adds one vote to your total. Convincing somebody who might otherwise have voted for the other side to vote for your guy adds two votes to your total. So, there is still a reason to worry about those

people in the middle even as their numbers have diminished a little bit further over the last several years.

MR. MANN: Alan.

DR. ABRAMOWITZ: Yes, I agree with that completely. I know Tony [unintell] was saying earlier before we started that, both parties are putting more resources than ever into voter registration and get out the vote. Tremendous amounts of money and effort are going into that on both sides. So, they obviously believe that is going to be critical.

I happen to agree with Larry. I think that the swing voters are still there. There is not a huge number of them, but there doesn't have to be a huge number of them to affect the outcome of the election.

I did a little study one time where I looked at the Senate elections to try to figure out what mattered more, turning out your base or how well you did among swing voters. It was kind of hard to figure out how to define swing voters, but I sort of looked at moderates and Independents.

What I found was that, both were important, but actually how you did among the swing voters was much more important than even your ability to turn out your base. So, I think that is going to be crucial in this election.

MR. MANN: John.

MR. HARWOOD: We are talking about two of the critical factors that we don't know how to predict for the election. In terms of swing voters, there is a debate going on over how many there are. Andy [unintell] thinks that his poll stands for the proposition that there is more swing than has been appreciated, because he showed 52/40 one week and 46/46 the next week.

So, that is something where there are different theories of the electorate. The Democrats think there are more swing voters and it is a pretty anti-Bush group. The Bush campaign thinks there are few of them and most of them won't vote. So, we will see.

In terms of the party balance on election day, the recent history is that the Democrats have a slight edge and I think the Democrats are hoping that they will retain that this time. The theory of the Bush campaign is, it is going to be an even split on partisanship on election day. But one of the things that makes identifying likely voters difficult and just calibrating the whole election is that, both campaigns are spending so much money on mobilization and we just don't know mechanically how effective they are going to be on both sides.

Are they going to be equivalently effective and balance each other out or is one side going to do better than the other? We don't know.

MR. MANN: All right, let's turn to questions here.

Tony?

QUESTION: I was just wondering if another factor that has gained some discussion that is difficult to predict is, what will happen with younger voters in this election? I thought the panel might talk a little bit about what do we know about those who are, say, under 30 years old in terms of their partisan leanings and affiliations and what that might mean if more of them decided to vote?

MR. MANN: Did you all hear that? Young voters and their partisan affiliations.

Larry.

PROFESSOR BARTELS: I think the way to think about this is that these partisan attachments, whatever they are, are reinforced over time through the kinds of perceptual mechanisms that were illustrated in that picture I showed you about how people thought the economy had gone under Reagan. If you think of yourself as a Republican, you see all kinds of things that are going on in the world through a Republican lens and that reinforces this attachment to the party.

They young people are the people who don't have that and so their partisan attachments are weaker, more volatile and much more sensitive to the [unintell] of the political moment. So, during the 1960s, they were overwhelmingly Democratic. During the Reagan years, they were consistently pretty Republican. During the Clinton years, they were more Democratic again. So, it is much harder to predict what they are going to look like.

They are likely to be more volatile and more responsive to the issues of the moment.

MR. : We show them significantly more Democratic in our poll right now. Kerry gets a significant advantage. I'm just looking. I've got Andy [unintell] poll right here. Let me see what he shows.

MR. : In fact, he had a--between time one and time two, he had huge increase among young voters for Kerry, which seemed to be probably more a function of sample than of sentiment.

MR. HARWOOD: Eighteen to 29, you are all voters. September 8th through 10th Andy had Bush plus 20, 55/35. He has Kerry plus 14, September 11th through 14. Just to go to the previous period before the Republican Convention, he had them plus 18 for Kerry.

That's a bigger advantage than we have shown in our "Journal/NBC" Poll, but we have consistently shown a Democratic edge in party identification and in support for Kerry over Bush.

MR. : I think if you average that out over time and across polls, you would find that pretty consistent.

MR. : Just one little methodological point to add here. If you think the samples in these surveys are bad, the samples of people under the age of 30 are really bad.

MR. : Or any of the sub-samples.

MR. : But especially those people, because they are hard to reach by the phone. They are not very interested.

MR. : One other thing that really irritates me and a lot of the poll analyses you get in the media is that they will focus in on a particular subgroup in the electorate and talk about how much it has changed since their previous poll. They will focus on a regional subgroup or an income subgroup, whatever shows the most change. They always tend to focus on whatever shows the most change because that, of course, is interesting.

Just saying that, well, there has been no change, is not a very interesting news story. But--

MR. HARWOOD: You don't have to make a living writing a story.

[Laughter]

MR. : I really think that the newspapers [simultaneous discussion] quite as much, but CNN, poor Bill Schneider, I mean, before that 2000 election, every time the Gallup Tracking Poll came up with its latest gyration, he had to sit there with a

straight face and come up with some plausible explanation for why the electorate had shifted by 20 points in the last three days. And he tried.

MR. : It is really one of the difficult situations that media organizations find themselves in, because they have their poll. They have to make use of it, but these are bright people. They are reading the other polls. They know all of the risks and the errors associated with it, but you can't ignore your own poll. How to put it in perspective and not make it news but a tool to interpret other things is one of the great challenges.

MR. HARWOOD: We tend at the "Wall Street Journal" to regard the one that we pay for as by far the most important [simultaneous discussion].

MR. MANN: Don.

PROFESSOR GREEN: With, again, respect to Tony's question about young voters is that, granted two-thirds of the public lives outside of battleground states, but this election with 17 battleground states we will see campaigns go all the way down to the bottom of the target list. Ordinarily, young people are ignored by campaigns, because they want to target likely or frequent voters.

This particular election has enough ground activity in places like Ohio and Pennsylvania and Florida, Iowa, Missouri, et cetera, to enable campaigns to get to young voters whom they otherwise miss. So, my prediction is that youth voter turn out will be up in those battleground states, but perhaps down everywhere else. I think this poses a real challenge to parties.

Over the years, they have done a very poor job of building party identification for the long haul among young voters. They tend to ignore young voters and they don't necessarily have any institutions in place to build up the number of, say,

Democrats or Republicans among them. This might be their one chance, but ironically by [unintell] overwhelmingly in battleground states. They might actually fail to develop party attachment elsewhere.

MR. MANN: I think that was the case for the direct election of presidents, but we will take that up later.

Gary.

QUESTION: Thanks. Gary Mitchell, from the "Mitchell Report." Two things, one a comment that I thought I heard Andy Kohut say yesterday that, in this most recent wave that he has done in comparison to earlier ones and going all the way back to June that, the size of the swing, undecided pool is actually larger now than it was in his earlier surveys.

MR. : Doesn't that mean they weren't really decided in the earlier surveys?

[Laughter]

MR. : And he measured it wrong earlier.

[Laughter]

MR. : [Simultaneous discussion].

MR. : I want to ask a really simple question and break the campaign conundrum and I get asked this question a lot. That is, if you just put all the polls aside and say Al Gore won the popular vote by 500,000 in 2000 and it is hard to believe there is a person alive who voted Gore in 2000 who will vote for Bush in 2004. Why are we talking about--

MR. : Zell Miller, come on.

[Laughter]

MR. : I meant to say sane. But I think you get the point. There are people who are saying, I don't get it. If Gore won by 500,000 votes, popular votes in 2000 and there is not one person who voted for Gore who will vote for Bush in 2004, how do we explain polls that tell us that Bush is way ahead.

MR. : Well, I don't think it is quite accurate that there are no voters out there who voted for Gore that are--I mean, I think there are some. I don't think there is a huge number. I mean, I have seen--most of the polls do show a very high degree of partisan voting and candidate preference this year. Very few Democrats in most polls supporting Bush. Very few Republican supporting Kerry.

MR. MANN : It's very hard to measure this, because if you go back and ask people what their vote was in 2000, Bush has an nine to 11 point lead. So, people who voted for Gore have already--and are attracted to Bush, have already reinterpreted or changed their 2000 vote or lied.

So, actually someone once did an experiment. They said send me an e-mail if you were a Gore voter in 2000 who intends to vote for Bush in 2004. They got a lot of traffic. So, such people exist.

John.

MR. HARWOOD: I would say, first of all, the number of people who voted for Bush who are not voting for Bush this time is smaller than is generally advertised, I think, A. B, a lot more people are going to vote in this election, at least, by the estimation of the campaigns. 105 million people voted in 2000. The Bush campaign thinks about 110 million will vote this time. Some other people, Curtis Gans[ph], at the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate who knows a lot about this stuff thinks it could go as high as 120.

So, one of the reasons why--well, that is one of the reasons Bush could have a big lead. But we have seen pretty consistently that he is stuck at about--if you take away this period after the convention, which sort of produced some distortions, I think, Bush has been around 47, 48 percent of the vote consistently. Is he going to fall any? He's probably not going to fall much more, but he's probably not going to rise much more either.

MR. : Generally, incumbents, when they are below 50 percent rarely end up above 50 percent. The undecided vote--

MR. : It may not take 50 to win.

MR. : It may not, but usually the undecided vote generally breaks further challenges.

MR. : Tom talked about wanting to rely not on any one poll, even it if it the one your newspaper happens to sponsor, but on the range of results across any series of polls at any given time. Part of the information there is not only the average, but also the variability of the results from different surveys.

The same thing could be said about these academic forecasting models, which are another way that you might get a handle on the election outcome. They, too, have an average and a lot of variability around that average. I think they range from about 50 percent to 57 percent for Bush in the popular vote, something like that. That's another source of information.

The historical voting patterns of these different places, as you suggested, is another pretty reliable source of information about what is going to happen this time. I think the sensible way to interpret all these different pieces of evidence is to figure out

some way to combine them, rather than to take any one of them and hold it up and say, here is the basis for knowing what is going to happen next.

MR. : Which is exactly what the campaigns do. Both the Bush and Kerry campaigns aren't doing national polling, because they are fighting it out state by state. But what they are doing to come up with their margins is taking nearly all the national polls--they might throw out a couple that they don't respect or whatever.

But they throw them all, average them together and come up with a margin, which is why with all this volatility in public polls over the last few days, the Bush and Kerry campaigns tell me precisely the same thing as to what they think the margin is, three to four points in Bush's favor. That is because they are averaging the same polls.

MR. : Historically, if you try to account for the election outcome, you would do better using the election outcome from four years ago in a given state than you do using the poll results as of even late--

MR. : One note of caution on averaging all the polls though is, I went back and did that just about a few days ago, looking at all the polls that were conducted in the week before the 2000 election. There were 43 national polls conducted in the week before the 2000 election. Bush was leading in 39 of them. Bush's average margin was almost four points in the week before the 2000 election.

So, either Gore had this big, late surge, which I happen to think is not very plausible or there was some problem. I would love to go back and find out what the partisan composition of the likely voters in those polls was.

MR. : Or there was a big turnout advantage for the Democrats.

MR. : But there wasn't. I mean, the composition of the electorate was the same as it had been in 1196, 1992 and 1988. So, I don't see any reason--

MR. : In terms of partisanship, you mean?

MR. : Right.

MR. : Well, I know that if you talk to people in both campaigns, they think Democrats did a lot better, both in the last week, Bush's DUI and that sort of stuff, but also mechanically on election day. I don't know whether that is--

MR. MANN: Right, it is an article of faith among the people, but there are some questions about the evidence supporting it.

Yes, Pietro.

MR. NIVOLA: Thanks.

I have two questions for the great panel. By the way, thank you very much.

The first one has to do with this question of ideological sorting that Larry was talking about, the polarization. One could make an argument that the parties, at least in this election, have actually converged quite a bit. This isn't Ronald Reagan's GOP. This is a GOP that has championed the largest expansion of an entitlement program in 40 years, a big federal footprint in local public education, farm subsidies, a lot of things.

On the Democratic side, you could argue that Kerry is actually running more toward the center than Gore did or even than Clinton did in 1992. How does one square that with the polarization thesis?

My second question is, what has happened to ticket splitting in general?

MR. : There's less of it. There's still a lot.

MR. : For example in--I don't know if you have the information. On the latter question, I think in House voting it is down to less than ten percent that vote for a president of one party and a member of the House of the other.

MR. : But if you look at Democratic incumbents and Republican incumbents, you find that there is a pretty large advantage there due to ticket splitting. Most of the ticket splitting is due to incumbency advantage.

MR. MANN: But if you average it over time, it has declined some and it is roughly one in ten.

I don't know who wants to take on the first question. You're right; it is a complicated picture. What I would say, Pietro, is that the parties themselves have dug in on a whole range of social-cultural issues in their platforms, in their positions, which divides them in a very clear sense.

Secondly, what I think the argument would be is that Bush in two respects has been much, if you will, bolder if not conservative. The argument is certainly that he is extreme in his views in his tax cut strategies and in his foreign policy relative to Reagan. That is, Reagan had his big tax cut, but then signed three tax increases out of fear that the deficits would get out of hand.

Similarly, he began with very robust, aggressive talk vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, but ended up proposing the elimination of all nuclear weapons. In some respects, you could argue he was moving very much toward the Democratic Party.

So, I would argue it is a combination of the difference of the party's positions on social issues and Bush's signature contributions on tax cuts and preemptive war, particularly in Iraq, that divide the parties and reinforce the kind of polarization that has occurred.

MR. : I also think his alignment with the religious right, I think his embracing the agenda of the religious right, even though you could argue that maybe he hasn't done that much for them. But he has, of course, endorsed the constitutional amendment on gay marriage.

MR. : I think this discussion illustrates the complexity of trying to figure out the relationship between partisanship and ideology, because the specific issues that yo mentioned are ones that used to be central to the ideological debate, but are not any longer, because the Republican Party has now given up the position of fiscal responsibility and is in some ways much more in favor of deficit spending than the Democrats were in the battle days of deficit spending.

We now have a new definition of what ideology means that doesn't include that and people have aligned in a way that's consistent with their partisan loyalties because of that.

MR. : I still think on issue like social security, Medicare, education that the voters still perceive the parties as being pretty distinctive, because indeed Kerry is proposing much more generous programs in those areas than what Bush is.

MR. : Bush is proposing partial privatization of social security.

MR. MANN: Exactly, so there remain differences there as well. You might just give 30 seconds or 60 seconds on the research you have done on the impact of partisanship of the administration on the growth in income of various sectors of the American public.

MR. : What I've done is part of a separate project. It is to look at patterns of income growth at different parts of the income distribution under Republican and Democratic presidents over the last 50 years. This does not speak to the question of

whether things are more or less polarized now than they were, but the consistent historical pattern is that there are big differences in who does well under what kinds of presidents.

Not surprisingly, people at the top of the income distribution do pretty well regardless of which party is in power. But for the middle class and especially toward the bottom of the distribution there are big differences. So, for example, people at the 20th percentile who are more or less the working poor these days, have average real income gains of more than four times as large under Democratic presidents as under Republican presidents.

Now, all of this analysis is through 2001, which is the last year I attribute to the Clinton administration. I can't tell you what the numbers are for 2002 and 2003, because the data for this calculation have mysteriously disappeared from the bureau's website. But my guess is that, when the data do eventually become available, they will be consistent with that pattern and, if anything, will show that the kind of distributional consequences of partisan control are at least as great now as they have been in the past.

MR. : Do you think it is worth pointing out that one of the segments of the electorate where Democrats have made some progress in recent years is the top quintal of the electorate, which I think is because you've had moving through the economy a sector of socially liberal, baby-boom types who are very well educated and advanced degrees are correlated with Democratic partisanship and support of Democratic candidates.

So, there is a certain sort of professional highly educated class that is supporting, despite these trends, supporting Democrats more frequently. I think, if I remember right, Gore got 44 percent of the vote in the top income quintal, which was

something on the order of seven or eight percent more than Clinton got in 1992, I believe.

MR. : But if you go back to the '50s, Larry's evidence suggests that, in fact, there is sharper income division, a party division by income now.

[Simultaneous discussion]

MR. MANN: We have gone well beyond our time. I think we should declare victory and thank our participants. Thank you all for coming.

[Applause]

[Whereupon, the proceedings in the aforementioned matter were concluded.]