



# The Misrepresentation of Political Polarization in Today's Society

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### Abstract

My research has been focused on political polarization, a move away from the center on both ends, and the debate on elite vs. mass polarization. The goal was to find the established authors in the field and to identify a clear definition of political polarization. There is debate in the literature as to the increase of political polarization among the masses with regard to the prevalence and generational increase (or lack thereof). However, the literature broadly agrees that there has been an increase in polarization of the elites, including elected officials and media. This information has changed how we are researching political polarization and its effect on higher education. A review of media reporting was conducted on two popular laws passed in Florida that impact college students. The conclusion is that these two bills seem to be largely inconsequential; there does not seem to be any way to report any infractions to the bill, and any consequences for infractions are unknown or unspecified. My analysis suggests that political polarization has not trickled down into the masses, however, recent developments in higher education policy warrant further research.

### Introduction

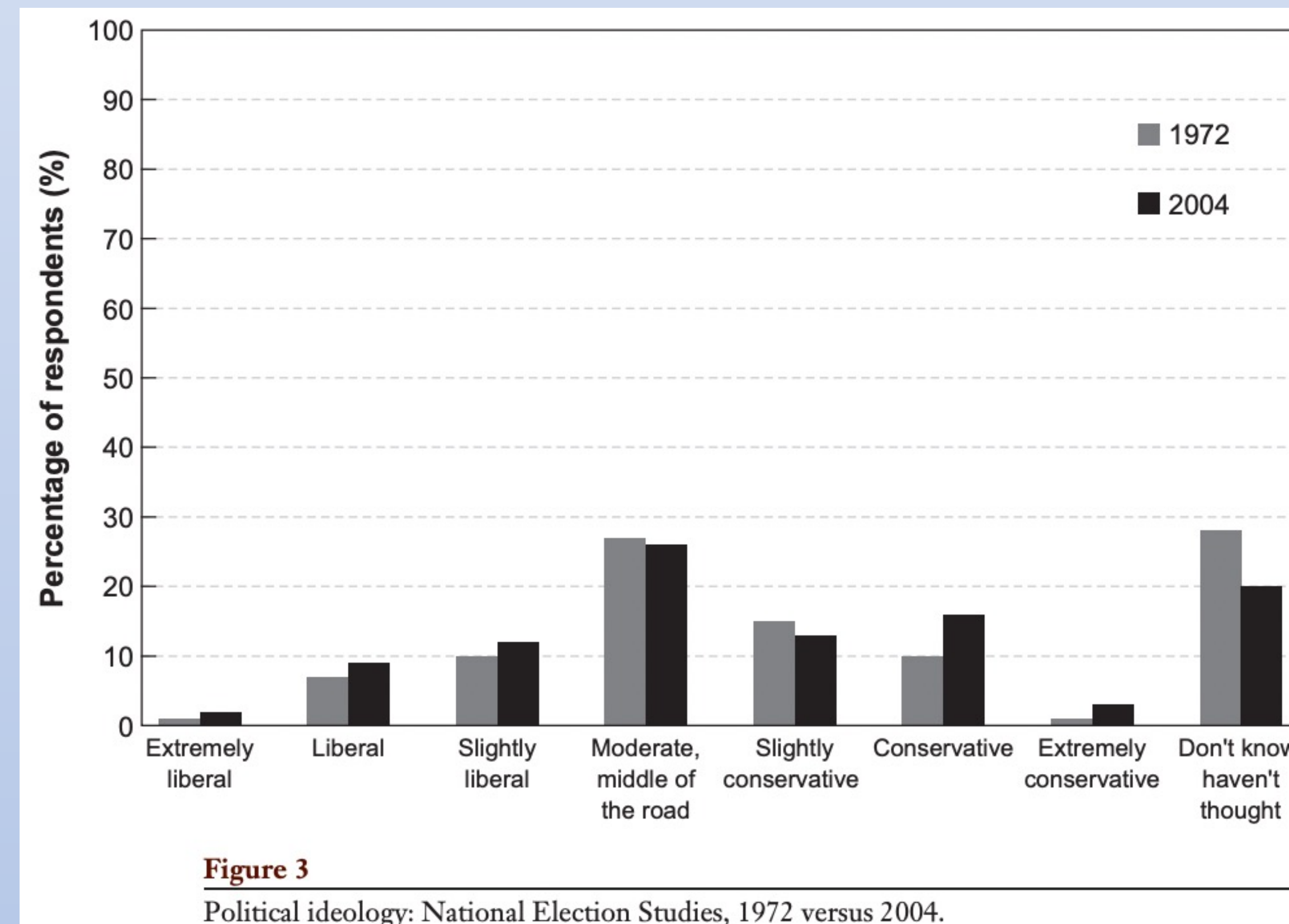
- Part 1: Literature analysis of political polarization devolution (current study)
- Part 2: How does political polarization affect critical thinking among college students? (future study; UROP project by Dr. Modi, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences)

### Methods

- A literature review was conducted on political polarization as a broad concept
- Reviewed popular media covering HB7 and HB233

### Results

- Political Polarization- “opposing or conflicting principles, tendencies, or points of view” (Fiorina & Abrams, 2008)
- Fiorina- no significant increase in polarization over generations, not inherently present in American society



- Abramowitz- challenges both of Fiorina's main points (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008)

**TABLE 1 Ideological Polarization in the American Electorate by Decade**

Group	1982-1990	1992-2000	2002-2004
All Respondents	24	29	33
Nonvoters	18	19	19
Voters	27	34	37
Low Knowledge	16	17	19
High Knowledge	38	43	48
Low Interest	19	18	21
High Interest	34	39	45
No College	19	20	21
Some College	29	32	32
College Grads	36	43	49

- Media analysis revealed that HB7 and HB233 suggest top-down polarization- little evidence of these bills inciting polarization
- There seems to be no way to report infractions of the bills, consequences for potential violations are not obvious

### Conclusion

- Literature suggests elite polarization, mass polarization is debated
- The current literature needs to be updated for the current political climate and role of media
- HB7 and HB233 do not seem to incite mass polarization, recent developments warrant further research

### References

Abramowitz, A. I. & Saunders, Kyle. (2008). Is Polarization a Myth? *The Journal of Politics*, 70(2), 542–555.

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