

To vote or not to vote?

The relationship between ideological- and affective polarisation and the
intention to vote

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Abstract

In this thesis the analytical- and empirical differences between ideological- and affective polarisation will be investigated as well as how these two manifestations of polarisation relate to the intention to vote of Americans during the presidential elections of 2020, using data from the American National Election Studies 2020 time series. A Spearman's correlation shows that there is no relationship between ideological- and effective polarisation. After conducting multiple binary logistic regression analyses, significant effects were found for ideological polarisation, affective polarisation, media exposure, educational attainment, sex and age. Educational attainment, affective polarisation, ideological polarisation and media exposure have the largest effect on the intention to vote of Americans during the presidential elections of 2020.

Keywords: intention to vote; ideological polarisation; affective polarisation; social identity theory and media exposure

Introduction

When former-president Trump got elected in 2016, he promised to build a wall between the United States of America and Mexico. Trump succeeded. Not in building a wall at the border, but he built a wall in Washington by turning the capital into a military basis during the inauguration of president Biden. Not only a wall was built between the Democratic- and the Republican Party, but a sky high wall was raised between American citizens (NOS, 2021; Cohn, 2021; Miller & Conover, 2015). Animosity prevails between the Democratic- and Republican Party and their members call their opponents hypocritical, selfish and closed-minded (Ygengar et al., 2012; Ygengar et al., 2019). President Biden and vice-president Harris inherited a country that is politically divided and tured apart by racism and inequality. A country that shocked the world when supporters of former president Trump stormed the Capitol – at his prompting (NRC, 2021; Grynbaum, 2020). Structural racism and (ethnic) inequalities are part of America her past and present. American society fosters (racial) discrimination and inequality through reinforcing systems of housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care and criminal justice. Discriminatory beliefs, values and distribution of resources are reinforced by these patterns and practices (Bailey et al, 2017; Lavalley & Johnson, 2020). Besides, the presidential elections of 2020 were not only historical because they embodied the highly polarised soul of the country or were claimed ‘to be stolen’ by Trump: the voter turnout was also historically high (Rutenberg et al., 2021). The voter turnout was 66,9 percent and therefore it was the highest in 120 years, when measured as a percentage of the voting-eligible population (Desilver, 2021).

The situation described above, whereby there is animosity between members of the Democratic- and Republican Party, paints a clear picture of affective polarisation. The latter refers to the tendency of party supporters to experience negative feelings with regard to other parties and positive feelings for their own party (Reiljan, 2020). Investigating affective polarisation is relevant from a societal point of view. Affective polarisation has namely serious political consequences. For example, those who dispute the motives and character of political opponents (who control the government) are less likely to consider their opponents’ decisions and policies as legitimate. They are also less satisfied with the functioning of the involved political institutions (Ygengar et al., 2012). Besides, affective polarisation influences ordinary social life in America. Citizens are unwilling to socialize across party lines or partner with opponents in a variety of other activities (Ygengar et al., 2019). The percentage of

Americans who would be somewhat or very unhappy if their child married someone of the opposite party, increased by 35 percentage points over the last 50 years (Iyengar et al., 2012). In addition, it is possible that these negative sentiments towards the other party and its members are fuelled by negative messages in the media (Iyengar et al., 2012). Besides affective polarisation, it is also socially relevant to conduct research about ideological polarisation. The latter refers to the ideological gap in policy stands between political parties (Fiorina & Abrams, 2011). Scholars argue that one of the main reasons for the increase of affective polarisation is increasing disagreement with policies developed by the opposing party (Abromowitz & Saunders, 2017). Therefore, increasing polarisation in general is viewed as one of the main challenges faced by the United States of America. It namely endangers the pluralistic values of respect for diversity that a democracy is expected to protect and promote (Hernandez et al., 2021). Besides, it is widely associated with the erosion of democratic norms and the decline of social trust (Hartefeld & Wagner, n.d.).

In addition, it is also relevant to examine the relationship between voter intentions and the two manifestations of polarisation. The voter turnouts of the presidential election of 2020 were namely historically high (Desilver, 2021). To interpret this event and to understand voter intentions, it is interesting to investigate whether ideological- and affective polarisation increase the intention to vote of Americans. This type of research is also scientifically relevant. Based on a meta-analysis of 83 aggregate-level empirical studies, it can be concluded that there is little agreement on what determines voter turnouts (Geys, 2006). A huge number of variables are namely brought in relation with voter intentions and turnouts. However, none of the variables is omnipresent. Besides, polarisation in general is only included in one of the examined studies (Geys, 2006). There is thus a gap in the knowledge about ideological- and affective polarisation and the intention to vote.

Besides, there is an ongoing debate whether the ideological gap between policy positions of the Democratic - and Republican Party has increased, declined or remained stable the last years (Iyengar et al., 2019; Fiorina et al., 2005; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; McCarty et al., 2006). That is why some scholars proposed a new conceptualisation of polarisation, named affective polarisation. However, some scholars argue that the notion of affective polarisation is completely different from ideological polarisation (Iyengar et al., 2012 and Iyengar et al., 2019). While others stated that affective polarisation has ideological underpinnings (Lelkes, 2021). Investigating the relationship between ideological- and affective polarisation thus contributes to this ongoing debate.

In addition, ideological- and affective polarisation are both phenoms found to prevail at the macro level of society. Yet, studies did not fully succeed in developing macro measurements of ideological- and affective polarisation. Most studies, therefore, focus on the micro mechanisms at the individual level of polarisation (e.g. Abromowitz & Saunders, 2008; Mason, 2015; Ygengar et al., 2012). Only two studies focus on measuring polarisation at the macro level, but this type of measurement is still in an early phase (Hartefeld & Wagner, n.d.; Kleiner, 2019). In this thesis ideological- and affective polarisation will also be operationalised and measured at the individual level.

Because of the ongoing debate about the conceptualisation of polarisation, the following question will be investigated:

(1) How does ideological polarisation and affective polarisation of citizens of the United States of America relate to each other at the individual level in 2020?

The second question that will be answered is based on the increase of affective polarisation on one hand and the historically high voter turnout of the presidential election of 2020 on the other hand:

(2) What is the effect of affective polarisation of citizens of the United States of America - at the individual level - on the intention to vote for the presidential election of 2020, when taking ideological polarisation and media exposure into account?

To answer these research questions, both pre-election and post-election data of the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2020 time series will be used (ANES, 2020). In order to answer the first research question, a Spearman's correlation will be performed. Multiple binary logistic regression analyses will be performed to answer the second research question.

Theory

In this section several theories and studies will be discussed. First, the ongoing debate about whether ideological polarisation has increased, decreased or remained stable will be discussed. After that, it will be discussed how this debate resulted in scholars favouring a new concept with regard to polarisation, namely affective polarisation. Third, the empirical- and analytical differences between ideological- and effective polarisation will be discussed. Last, the relationship between both ideological- and affective polarisation and the intention to vote will be explored. However, there is limited research conducted regarding the relationship

between polarisation in general and the intention to vote. Because of the very strong relationship between pre-election voting intentions and the actual vote choice, research about voter turnouts is included as well (Abromowitz & Saunders, 2008).

Ideological polarisation

In social science, there is a long tradition of studying ideological polarisation (Fiorina et al., 2005; Abromowitz & Saunders, 2008). In the majority of the literature -as in this thesis- ideological polarisation is defined as the intensification of orientation discrepancy dividing substantive parts of the society into opposing camps, while the moderates are losing ground (Fiorina & Abrams, 2011; DiMaggio et al., 1996; Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008). These scholars claim that an ideological distance between oppositional factions within society can lead to polarisation. Orientations and attitudes may systematically sort individuals along multiple lines of potential conflict. This process leads to organising individuals into groups centred around exclusive identities (Kleiner, 2019). However, such grouping does not necessarily lead to exclusive social identities. Polarisation of the mass namely increases the ideological distance between oppositional factions within society (Kleiner, 2019). According to DiMaggio and colleagues (1996), the more closely associated different social attitudes become, the greater the likelihood is of implacable conflict.

However, among these scholars there is no consensus whether ideological polarisation has increased, decreased or remained stable during the last decades. On one side you have the minimalists such as Fiorina, Abrams and Pope (2005). They argue that twentieth-first-century Americans are not very well-informed about politics. Besides, they stated that Americans do not hold many of their views very strongly and are thus not ideological. Abromowitz and Saunders (2008), examples of maximalists, tested Fiorina's claims. In contrast, they found that the mass public has polarized on policy issues. They also found that there has been a decline in the number of ideological moderates. In addition, other scholars argue that the American party elites became increasingly ideologically polarized over the past four decades (Hetherington, 2015; McCarty et al., 2006). Their analyses show that there is an increased division between the Democratic- and Republican Party on policy issues (Ygengar et al., 2012). Concluding, there is little to no agreement whether the ideological gap between Democratic- and Republican Party has increased, declined or remained stable.

Affective polarisation

This ongoing debate was the reason for scholars as Ygengar, Sood and Lelkes (2012) to develop an alternative definition of polarisation, called affective polarisation. This is

defined as the tendency among party supporters to view other party/parties as disliked out-group(s), while holding positive in-group feelings for one's own party (Reiljan, 2020). Affective polarisation is based on the classic concept of social identity and social distance. Social psychology experiments demonstrate that any form of group membership, such as political parties, trigger positive feelings for the in-group and negative feelings towards the out-group. The more salient the group is to the sense of personal identity, the stronger the divisions between in-group and out-group become (Ygengar et al., 2012). In addition, Mason (2015) identified two mechanisms driving affective polarisation: partisan identity strength and political identity alignment. The strength of an individual's identification with its political party affects how biased, active and angry a person is. Even if that person is moderate on policy positions. In addition, when partisan and ideological identities move into alignment, that alignment motivates even more bias, activism and anger independently of its effect on partisanship. Therefore, it is possible for an electorate as a whole to regard out-group partisans with increasing prejudice, to take action against the out-group party and to feel anger in response to electoral challenges from the out-group party. This can take place even if there is no change in policy stands between the political parties (Mason, 2015).

Evidence suggests that the United States of America became more affectively polarised during the last years (Ygengar et al., 2012; Ygengar & Westwood, 2015; Ygengar et al., 2019). Party supporters including leaning independents hold more and more negative feelings towards the opposing party and its candidates. Scholars argued that this led to dramatic increases in party loyalty and straight-ticket voting in the past sixty years (Ygengar et al., 2012).

Theoretical- and empirical differences between ideological- and affective polarisation

Scholars who conducted research about ideological polarisation reacted on this new concept. They claimed that affective polarisation has ideological roots (Lelkes, 2021). These scholars argue that partisan identities have become increasingly aligned with ideological positions. Republicans therefore became more likely to hold conservative positions and Democrats are more likely to hold liberal positions compared to the past. Bougher (2017) as well as Webster and Abromowitz (2017) claim that this process has increased affective polarisation. According to the latter, there is a close connection between affective- and ideological polarisation. Webster and Abromowitz (2017) presented evidence that opinions on social welfare issues have become increasingly consistent and divided along party lines. Besides, social welfare ideology is strongly related to feelings about the opposing party and

its leaders. For example, conservative Republicans hold far more negative feelings about the Democratic Party and its leaders than moderate-to-liberal Republicans. On the other hand, liberal Democrats hold far more negative feelings about the Republican Party and its leaders than moderate-to-conservative Democrats. In addition, Webster and Abromowitz (2017) conducted a survey experiment and found that there is a causal relationship between ideological distance and affect: the greater the ideological distance, the more negative the affect. According to them, partisan identity alone does not lead to strong negative feelings towards their opponents but it is partisan identity combined with policy disagreement that produces negative feelings. According to Reiljan (2020), ideological- and affective polarisation are indeed significantly correlated to each other. But he also stated: ‘‘ they are far from congruent and should be treated as separate concepts ‘’(p. 377). Affective polarisation namely presents the attitudes of citizens towards the in- and out-group parties, while ideological polarisation says something about the policy gap between the parties. The conclusion that ideological- and affective polarisation are closely related is disputed by research of Ygengar and colleagues (2012). They argue that numerous studies have found a weak association between ideological- and affective polarisation and stated that affective polarisation has only weak ideological underpinnings. Also, Lelkes (2021) found that ideological- and affective polarisation are weakly linked. Both partisan-ideological sorting and unsorting have namely become more affectively polarised. These findings can be explained by the lack of ideological awareness of Americans. To see parties in ideological terms, citizens have to be aware of the policy stances of the Democratic- and Republican Party. However, most Americans experience difficulties correctly locating parties on issue scales (Ygengar et al., 2012). Numerous scholars conclude that Americans view parties and their members with affective glasses on and not with ideological ones (Ygengar et al, 2012; Ygengar et al., 2019; Mason, 2015; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009).

Looking at the evidence presented from both sides, it can be concluded that no consensus is reached whether ideological- and affective polarisation are closely linked to each other or not. However, the evidence presented that affective polarisation is theoretically and empirically distinct from ideological polarisation is more convincing. Ideological polarisation is namely not synonymous with affective polarisation, because they can occur independently of each other. Citizens can hold increasingly prejudiced beliefs against out-group partisans, can be driven to take action against the out-group party and can feel anger in response to electoral challenges from the out-group, while there is no increasing gap in policy stands

between the parties (Mason, 2015). This thesis will contribute to the debate by investigating whether the assumed weak relationship between affective polarisation and ideological polarisation is persistent and consistent by using new data from the ANES 2020 time series study. This leads to the following hypotheses:

[H1] There exists a weak positive relationship between ideological polarisation and affective polarisation of citizens of the United States of America in 2020.

Ideological polarisation and the intention to vote

Fiorina and colleagues (2005) argue that ideological polarisation leads to fewer citizens casting their vote and will depress voter turnouts. They argue that when ideological conflict increases and candidates ideologies become more “extreme”, citizens located around the centre consider both candidates as not enough appealing to go vote. This argumentation is in line with research conducted by Rogowski (2014). The results indicate that increasing policy differences between House- and Senate candidates significantly reduce voter turnout. In the districts where candidates had clearly distinct policy positions, the citizens were five percentage points less likely to vote compared to citizens in districts where the candidates’ policy differences were not as substantial.

Abromowitz and Saunders (2008) tested the claim that ideological polarisation depresses voter turnout. They found evidence for the opposite effect: ideological polarisation energizes the electorate to vote. They argue that the intense ideological polarisation of the American electorate about George W. Bush, pushed people to the ballot boxes during the presidential election of 2004. Voters namely perceive greater difference between the candidates and parties and therefore there is more at stake. This process thus draws citizens to the ballot boxes and they become more engaged. The study shows that 75% of the Americans felt that there were important differences between the Democratic- and the Republican Party and 85% cared about who would win the presidential election. These percentages were considerably lower during the presidential elections of the 1950s and 1960s. During these elections, 50% of the Americans perceived important differences between the parties and 65% cared about who won. Fiorina and Abrams (2008) reacted on these findings and called them “exaggerated” and said there was an alternative explanation for these results (p. 583). They argue that there was a sharp increase in party mobilization that led to higher voter turnouts. According to Fiorina and Abrams (2008), ideological polarisation cannot be the driving force behind increasing voter turnouts. Most Americans are namely not aware that politics has become increasingly polarised. This statement of Fiorina and Abrams (2008) is in contrast to

earlier statements that Americans do not hold their views very strongly and that they are not ideological (Fiorina et al., 2005).

More recent research by Kleiner (2019) provides evidence for the claim that ideological polarisation energizes the electorate to vote. Kleiner (2019) argued that ideological polarisation puts citizens on the defensive with regard to their values and beliefs. In a polarised environment people become more insecure about whether their norms and values will be replaced by other norms and values accompanied by corresponding policies in the future. Because of that, people experience deprivation which in turn energises them for political action. Kleiner (2019) conducted several macro-regressions as well as two-level regressions to examine whether regional polarisation with regard to the left-right dimension has an impact on political behaviour in Europe. The results show that the average citizen is not motivated by ideological polarisation to cast their vote. However, the average citizen is mobilised for non-electoral participation (e.g. signed a petition, worn a party badge, worked in a political party) by ideological polarisation. Based on these insights from existing literature, the following hypotheses is formulated:

[H2] Ideological polarisation has no effect on the intention to vote of citizens of the United States of America during the presidential election of 2020.

Affective polarisation and the intention to vote

The study of Abromowitz and Saunders (2008) also investigated whether affective polarisation increased the likelihood of voting and political activism. Affective polarisation was measured by rating George W. Bush on the feeling thermometer scale. They found that the most engaged voters were those who rated Bush either “cold” (below 30 degrees) or very warm (above 80 degrees) on the feeling thermometer. These two groups made up over half of the electorate. People who were neutral towards Bush (50 degrees), were the least engaged voters. This group made up less than 10% of the electorate (Abromowitz & Saunders, 2008). Abromowitz & Saunders (2008), complemented these findings with a logistic regression analyses. The dependent variable was activism (engaging in two or more campaign activities beyond voting) and the independent variables were ideological polarisation in the first analysis and affective polarisation in the second. They controlled for age, education, family income and partisan intensity. They found no significant effect of ideological polarisation on the probability of voting. But they did find a significant effect of affective polarisation on the probability of voting. Abromowitz and Saunders (2008) found both a significant effect of

ideological polarisation and affective polarisation on political activism. These effects were stronger and more significant than the effects found for the turnout model.

Ward and Tavits (2019) theorize that affective polarisation leads to high voter turnouts because “ affective polarisation results in viewing politics through the lens of group conflict and thereby raises the perceived stakes of electoral competition” (p. 2). They argue that the deeper the intergroup conflict is, the more important it is for someone’s self-image not to lose out to the out-group. Citizens are then drawn to the ballot box, because they think that the election is important. The perception of the importance of elections is related to how much people believe a country would change depending on who is elected. These results are in line with the research conducted by Crepaz and colleagues (2014). They show that lower out-group trust, a component of affective polarisation, increases political participation. In addition, Mayer (2017) found that negative partisanship increases turnout by about nine percentage points on average (within the context of European multi-party systems with proportional voting).

The relationship between affective polarisation and voter turnouts has also been investigated by Hartefeld and Wagner (n.d.). They analysed three different sources of longitudinal data of three countries (Spain, Germany and the Netherlands) at the aggregate- and individual level up to three decades. In each of their cases they found evidence for the relationship between affective polarisation and high voter turnouts. Bigger crowds are drawn to the ballot box, when the elections involve more antipathy towards political opponents. This relationship is reciprocal. However, the effect of affective polarisation on turnout is stronger and more robust than the reverse effect. Therefore, Hartefeld and Wagner (n.d.) conclude that affective polarisation has a mobilizing effect on citizens. Their findings imply that group loyalties and intergroup conflict – both on the level of political parties as at the individual level – play an important role in stimulating citizens to vote. Based on the presented literature the following hypotheses are formulated:

[H3a] Affective polarisation positively effects the intention to vote of citizens of the United States of America during the presidential election of 2020.

[H3b] Affective polarisation positively effects the intention to vote of citizens of the United States of America during the presidential election of 2020, after controlling for ideological polarisation.

Besides controlling for ideological polarisation, there will be also controlled for how closely the respondent follows politics in the media. The media, both offline as online, have namely a tendency to show the negative messages about the parties and its candidates over and over again. This confirms partisans' suspicions and negative feelings about the opposite party, its candidates and supporters (Ygengar et al., 2012). Besides, when partisans are exposed to partisan news it activates their partisan identity and consequent feelings toward the political parties (Ygengar et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be concluded that following politics in the media, both offline- and online, contributes to affective polarisation (Ygengar et al., 2012; Ygengar et al., 2019). This leads to the following hypotheses:

[H4] Affective polarisation positively effects the intention to vote of citizens of the United States of America during the presidential elections of 2020, after controlling for ideological polarisation and media exposure.

For a visualisation of the described theories (path model), see appendix A.

Method

First, the used dataset will be described. After that, the preparation of the data will be discussed as well as the operationalisation of the dependent variable and independent variables. Finally, the used quantitative statistical analyses will be described.

Data description

The data used for this thesis is collected by the American National Election Studies (ANES). ANES is a collaboration between Stanford University and the University of Michigan. For this thesis both pre-election as well as the post-election data from the 2020 time series study has been used. The ANES 2020 Time Series Study features a fresh cross-sectional sample, whereby the respondents are randomly assigned to one of three sequential mode groups: web only, mixed web (i.e., web and phone), and mixed video (i.e., video, web, and phone). The target population for the fresh cross-section consists out of 231 million non-institutional U.S. citizens age 18 or older living in one of the 50 states of America or in the District of Columbia (ANES codebook, 2021). The sampling frame for the fresh cross-section was a list of residential addresses and mail invitations were sent to these addresses. The invitation letter included ten dollar in cash and an additional 40 dollar was promised when the survey was completed online. The non-responding households of all groups of the sample were offered escalated incentives of 100 dollar later in the field period (ANES codebook, 2021).

In addition, the study features re-interviews with 2016 ANES respondents. These respondents were invited by mail, but a letter was sent when there was no email address available. A letter was also sent after an initial non-response. These emails and letters invited the residents of the sampled addresses to respond to a screener on the web. The re-interviews with 2016 ANES respondents were thus only conducted by web (ANES codebook, 2021).

In total, the pre-election wave consists out of 5.441 interviews and were conducted from August 18, 2020 until Election Day (November 3, 2020). The post-election surveys were conducted between November 8, 2020 and January 4, 2021 and consists out of 4783 respondents. The interviews in all modes were able to be conducted in English or Spanish (ANES codebook, 2021).

Data selection

In order to prepare the data, the following values are labelled as missing: inapplicable (-1), interview breakoff (-5), no post-election interview (-6), no post-election data, deleted due to incomplete interview (-7), don't know (-8), refused (-9) and don't know (don't know where to rate) (998). If a respondent scores one or more of these values, he/she/they is filtered out and is thus not included in the analyses. Every variable, therefore, has a total number of respondents of 6373 (N=6373).

Operationalisation

In most of the literature *ideological polarisation* is measured as the consistency of policy attitudes across six issues: immigration, health care, economy, abortion, same-sex marriage and gun control (Mason, 2018; Mason, 2015). The ANES 2020 time series data does not contain questions about all these topics with the same type of scale. However, it is possible to develop a new measurement of ideological polarisation, including the respondents policy stands regarding immigration, border control, health care, abortion, same-sex marriage and environment. Ideological polarisation can be captured in the following formula: $ABS((2-V202240_ideol) + (2-V201424_ideol) + (2-V202378_ideol) + (2-V201340_ideol) + (2-V201416_ideol) + (2-V201401_ideol))$. First, the score of each variable is subtracted from two. The value of two is namely considered to be the moderate point of view between the democratic stand and the republican stand. Another value than two (1 = in line with democratic stand or 3 = in line with republican stand) means that the respondent is ideologically polarised. After that, all the subtractions are summed up and the absolute values of this calculation are used. The measurement of ideological polarisation consists out of a seven points Likert scale. The minimum score is zero and the respondents' policy stands can

be considered as moderate on all the items. The respondent is thus not ideologically polarised at the individual level. The maximum score is six and means that the respondents' policy stands are all in favour of the democratic point of view or the republican one. The score of six therefore means that the respondents' policy stands are extremely ideologically polarised at the individual level.

To create this scale, six questions were used and were obtained from the ANES 2020 Time Series Study. In order to measure the respondents view regarding immigration, the following question was used: do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose providing a path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants who obey the law, pay a fine, and pass security checks (V202240)?. The respondent could choose between the following answers: (1) favor, (2) oppose or (3) neither favor nor oppose. To measure the respondents view with regard to border control, the following question will be used: do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose building a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico (V201424)?. The respondent could choose between: (1) favor, (2) oppose and (3) neither favor nor oppose. The following question has been asked to measure the respondents view about health care: do you favor an increase, decrease, or no change in government spending to help people pay for health insurance when they can't pay for it all themselves (V202378)?. The respondent could choose between: (1) increase, (2) decrease or (3) no change. In order to measure the respondents policy stand regarding abortion, the following question was included: would you be pleased, upset, or neither pleased nor upset if the Supreme Court reduced abortion rights (V201340)?. The respondent was presented the following answers: (1) pleased, (2) upset and (3) neither pleased nor upset. In order to measure the respondents view about same-sex marriages, the following question was used: which comes closest to your view (V201416)?. The respondent could choose between: (1) gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry, (2) gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry or (3) there should be no legal recognition of gay or lesbian couples' relationship. Finally, to measure the respondents view about the environment, the following question is used: do you think the federal government should be doing more about rising temperatures, should be doing less, or is it currently doing the right amount (V201401)?. The respondents can choose between (1) should be doing more, (2) should be doing less and (3) is currently doing the right amount. Before creating the ideological polarisation scale, all the missing's were filtered out as described in the data selection paragraph. In addition, all the answer categories are recoded into (1) in line with democratic stand, (2) moderate and (3) in line with republican stand.

Furthermore, *affective polarisation* is operationalised as a continuous scale measuring the absolute difference between the respondent's placements of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. This measurement can be captured in the following formula: $ABS(\text{feeling thermometer Democratic Party} - \text{feeling thermometer Republican Party})$. The minimum score is zero and means that the respondents is not affectively polarised and thus holds the same feelings towards the Democratic- as well as the Republican Party. The maximum value of 100 means that the respondent is extremely affectively polarised towards the Democratic Party and/or the Republican party. The affective polarisation scale consists out of two questions, namely: how would you rate the Democratic Party (V201156)? and, how would you rate the Republican Party (V201157)?. The participant can rate each party by using the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that the participant is favourable and warm towards the Democratic- and/or Republican Party. Ratings between the 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that the participant is unfavourable and cold toward that party. If the participant rates the party at the 50 degree mark, they do not feel practically warm or cold toward the Democratic- and/or Republican Party (Ygengar et al., 2012).

In addition, *the intention to vote* is operationalised by asking the respondent if he/she/they intends to vote for president (V201032). The participant can choose between (1) yes or (2) no. The values of this dichotomic variable are recoded into (0) no intention to vote and (1) intention to vote. *Media exposure* on the other hand is operationalised by asking the following question: how closely do you follow politics on TV, radio, newspapers, or the Internet (V202407)?. The respondent can choose between the following answers: (1) very closely; (2) fairly closely; (3) not very closely or (4) not at all. The answer categories are than recoded in to (1) not at all, (2) not very closely, (3) fairly closely and (4) very closely.

In addition, there will be controlled for educational attainment by asking what the highest level of school is that the participant has completed or the highest degree what the participant has received (V201510). The respondent can choose from: (1) less than 1st grade; (2) 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th grade; (3) 5th or 6th grade; (4) 7th or 8th grade; (5) 9th grade; (6) 10th grade; (7) 11th grade; (8) 12th grade no diploma; (9) high school graduate - high school diploma or equivalent; (10) some college but no degree (11) associate degree in college - occupational/vocational program; (12) associate degree in college - academic program; (13) bachelor's degree; (14) master's degree; (15) professional school degree; (16) doctorate degree or (17) other (V201510z). Besides the values that are labelled as missing described in the data selection paragraph, the option "other" (95) is also characterised as missing value. This is

because this variable (V201510z) is not available in the current data release (ANES, 2020). Fortunately, leaving out the information about what sort of other education the respondent had obtained will not compromise the reliability and validity of the analyses.

There will also be controlled for *sex*. This is operationalised by asking the respondent: What is your sex (V201600)? The respondent can choose between (1) male and (2) female. This variable is recoded into a dummy variable consisted out of 0 (male) and 1 (female). At last, *age* is operationalised by asking the respondent their birth day, month and year. However, the answers of the respondent are restricted. Fortunately, a summary of these variables has been made by ANES. This new variable (V201507x) provides information about the respondents age in years.

Quantitative analyses

To answer the first research question: how does ideological polarisation and affective polarisation of citizens of the United States of America relate to each other at the individual level in 2020?, a correlation will be performed by using SPSS 25. This analyses will confirm or reject the first hypothesis. Several binary logistic analyses will be conducted by using SPSS 25, in order to answer second research question: what is the effect of affective polarisation of citizens of the United States of America - at the individual level - on the intention to vote for the presidential election of 2020, when taking ideological polarisation and media exposure into account?. First, the independent variable (x) is ideological polarisation and the dependent variable (y) is the intention to vote. This analysis will confirm or reject the second hypothesis. Second, another binary logistic regression will be conducted to confirm or reject hypothesis 3a. The independent variable (x) is affective polarisation and the dependent variable (y) is the intention to vote. In addition, a new analysis is conducted whereby ideological polarisation is added as a control variable. Based on these findings, hypothesis 3b will be rejected or confirmed. Lastly, another analysis will be conducted with media exposure as a control variable and this analysis will reject or confirm hypothesis four. Besides, for all the four binary logistic regression there will be controlled for educational attainment, sex, and age. For every binary logistic regression analysis, the unstandardized Beta and estimated odds ratio will be presented. In order to make statements about the fit of the different models, the increase of the Chi-square will be included when a new variable is added to the model.

Finally, the binary logistic regression analyses are based on odds, therefore, it is not possible to compare the unstandardized effects of the variables. However, it is possible to calculate and compare the effects of all the independent variables for one standard deviation.

The following formula is used to calculate the effect for one standard deviation of the independent variables: estimated odds ratio^{s.d.}. The effects for one standard deviation will be calculated for all the variables included in model 4.

Results

First, the descriptive statistics will be presented. After that, the results for the Spearman's correlation between ideological- and affective polarisation will be discussed. Third, the results from multiple binary logistic regression analyses will be discussed. In addition, the effects for one standard deviation of the independent variables will be compared and discussed.

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive table (table 1) shows that most of the means of these variables are almost in between the minimum and maximum value. However, there are slightly more women than man who participated in the survey (46.4% is male and 53.6% is female). However, the mean and standard deviation of the intention to vote stands out. 93.4% of the respondents has namely the intention to vote and 6.6% has no intention to vote. This fact will be reflected in the discussion.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Dependent- and Independent Variables

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Min | Max |
|--------------------------|------|--------|----------------|-----|-----|
| Intention to vote | 6373 | 0.934 | - | 0 | 1 |
| Ideological polarisation | 6373 | 3.379 | 2.051 | 0 | 6 |
| Affective polarisation | 6373 | 51.204 | 30.342 | 0 | 100 |
| Media exposure | 6373 | 2.826 | 0.8310 | 1 | 4 |
| Educational attainment | 6373 | 4.599 | 2.027 | 1 | 8 |
| Sex | 6373 | 0.536 | - | 0 | 1 |
| Age | 6373 | 51.347 | 17.038 | 18 | 80 |

The correlation between ideological polarisation and affective polarisation

A Spearman's correlation is conducted to investigate whether there exists a relationship between ideological polarisation and affective polarisation among Americans in 2020. The results show that there is no correlation between these different manifestations of polarisation. The correlation is namely 0.012 and not significant (see appendix B). This means

that ideological polarisation and affective polarisation hardly correlate. The first hypothesis: there exists a weak positive relationship between ideological polarisation and affective polarisation of citizens of the United States of America in 2020, is therefore rejected. This is because the correlation between ideological- and affective polarisation is too small to even describe it as a ‘weak’ correlation and it is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can better be qualified as no correlation at all (Field, 2013).

Binary logistic regression analyses

Several binary logistic regression analyses are conducted to investigate whether ideological polarisation and/or affective polarisation have an effect on the intention to vote of Americans during the presidential elections of 2020.

The first model

The first model tests whether ideological polarisation influences the intention to vote and controls for educational attainment, sex and age. The Chi-square of the first model is 378.075 (df = 4) and is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The unstandardized Beta weight for the Constant; $B = (-1.059)$, $SE = 0.200$, $Wald = 28.126$, $p < .001$. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight for ideological polarisation: $B = 0.152$, $SE = 0.027$, $Wald = 31.178$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 16.4% [$\text{Exp}(B) = 1.164$, 95% CI (1.103, 1.227)] for the intention to vote every one unit increase of ideological polarisation. Therefore, ideological polarisation contributes to the model. The unstandardized B weight for educational attainment: $B = -0.356$, $SE = 0.030$, $Wald = 140.608$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 42.7% [$\text{Exp}(B) = 1.427$, 95% CI (1.346, 1.513)] for the intention to vote every one unit increase of educational attainment. Thus, educational attainment also contributes to the model. The unstandardized B weight for sex: $B = -0.226$, $SE = 0.105$, $Wald = 4.650$, $p < .05$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 25.4% [$\text{Exp}(B) = 1.254$, 95% CI (1.021, 1.540)] for the intention to vote if this person is female. Sex therefore contributes to the model as well as age. Namely, the unstandardized B weight for age: $B = -0.037$, $SE = 0.003$, $Wald = 131.588$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 3.8% [$\text{Exp}(B) = 1.038$, 95% CI (1.031, 1.044)] for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of age. All these statistics can also be found in table 2. To conclude, ideological polarisation has a statistically significant effect on the intention to vote of citizens of the United States of America during the presidential election of 2020. The second hypothesis stated that ideological polarisation had no effect on the intention to vote. However, this is in contrast with the results and therefore the second hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2*Binary Logistic Regression Model 1*

| | B | SE | OR | 95% CI for OR | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Ideological polarisation | 0.152 | 0.027 | 1.164*** | 1.103 | 1.227 |
| Educational attainment | 0.356 | 0.030 | 1.427*** | 1.346 | 1.513 |
| Sex | 0.226 | 0.105 | 1.254* | 1.021 | 1.540 |
| Age | 0.037 | 0.003 | 1.038*** | 1.031 | 1.044 |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The second model

The second binary logistic regression was conducted to investigate whether affective polarisation positively effects the intention to vote, after controlling for educational attainment, sex and age. The Chi-square of the second model is 526.324 (df = 4; $p < .001$) and this model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The unstandardized Beta weight for the Constant; $B = (-1.226)$, $SE = 0.196$, $Wald = 39.097$, $p < .001$. The unstandardized Beta weight for affective polarisation: $B = 0.023$, $SE = 0.002$, $Wald = 157.650$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 2.4% [Exp ($B = 1.024$, 95% CI (1.020, 1.027))] for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of affective polarisation. Thus, affective polarisation contributes to the model as well as educational attainment. Namely, the unstandardized Beta weight for educational attainment: $B = 0.379$, $SE = 0.030$, $Wald = 162.768$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 46.1% [Exp ($B = 1.461$, 95% CI (1.378, 1.549))] for the intention to vote every one unit increase of educational attainment. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight of sex: $B = 0.023$, $SE = 0.107$, $Wald = 4.674$, $p < .05$. The estimated odds ratio show an increase of 26.1% [Exp ($B = 1.261$, 95% CI (1.022, 1.556))] for the intention to vote every one unit increase of educational attainment. Sex therefore also contributes to the model. The unstandardized Beta weight for age: $B = 0.028$, $SE = 0.003$, $Wald = 71.879$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 2,8 % [Exp ($B = 0.294$, 95% CI (1.022, 1.035)) for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of age. The previous described results can be found in table 3. To conclude, affective polarisation has a positive effect - at the individual level - on the intention to vote of citizens of the United States of America during the presidential election of 2020 and thus is hypothesis 3a accepted.

The third model

The third model tests whether the effect of affective polarisation on the intention to vote remains significant after additionally controlling for ideological polarisation. The Chi-square of this model is 55.872 (df = 5) and the model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). After adding ideological polarisation to the model, the Chi-square increased with 29.548 (df = 1; $p < .001$). The unstandardized Beta weight for the Constant; $B = (-1.628)$, $SE = 0.212$, $Wald = 59.188$, $p < .001$. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight for affective polarisation: $B = -0.023$, $SE = 0.002$, $Wald = 155.548$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 2.3% [$\text{Exp}(B) = 1.023$, 95% CI (1.020, 1.027)] for the intention to vote every one unit increase of affective polarisation. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight for ideological polarisation: $B = 0.153$, $SE = 0.028$, $Wald = 28.922$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 16.5% [$\text{Exp}(B) = 1.165$, 95% CI (1.102, 1.232)] for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of ideological polarisation. The estimated odds ratio of affective polarisation decreased with 0.1 percentage point compared to the previous model. But remained significant and therefore affective polarisation still contributes to the model. In addition, the estimated odds ratio of educational attainment, sex and age decreased after adding ideological polarisation to the model. Despite of the decrease in estimated odds ratio's, these variables will not be further discussed for model three. The interpretation of the results remains comparable to the second model, only with slightly lower estimated odds ratio's. The complete statistics of model three, can be found in table 3. To conclude, affective polarisation has a significant positive effect on the intention to vote of citizens of the United States of America during the presidential election of 2020. Even after additionally controlling for ideological polarisation. Therefore, hypothesis 3b is accepted.

Table 3*Binary Logistic Regression Model 2 and 3*

| | Model 2 | | | | Model 3 | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|-------|----------|------------------|---------|-------|----------|------------------|
| | B | SE | OR | 95% CI for OR | B | SE | OR | 95% CI for OR |
| Affective polarisation | 0.023 | 0.002 | 1.024*** | 1.020 1.027 | 0.023 | 0.002 | 1.023*** | 1.020 1.027 |
| Educational attainment | 0.379 | 0.030 | 1.461*** | 1.378 1.549 | 0.348 | 0.030 | 1.416*** | 1.334 1.502 |
| Sex | 0.232 | 0.107 | 1.261* | 1.022 1.556 | 0.221 | 0.108 | 1.248* | 1.010 1.541 |
| Age | 0.028 | 0.003 | 1.028*** | 1.022 1.035 | 0.030 | 0.003 | 1.030*** | 1.023 1.037 |
| Ideological polarisation | | | | | 0.153 | 0.028 | 1.165*** | 1.102 1.232 |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The fourth model

In the last model, media exposure is added as a control variable. The Chi-square is 617.752 (df = 6) and the model is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The Chi-square increased with 61.881 (df = 1; $p < .001$) compared to the third model. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight for the Constant is; $B = (-2.509)$; $SE = 0.243$; $Wald = 106.944$, $p < .001$. The unstandardized Beta weight for affective polarisation: $B = 0.021$, $SE = 0.002$, $Wald = 124.768$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 2.1% [$Exp(B) = 1.021$, 95% CI (1.017, 1.025)] for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of affective polarisation. Affective polarisation, thus, contributes to the model. Ideological polarisation is also found to contribute to the model and has an unstandardized Beta weight: $B = 0.123$, $SE = 0.029$, $Wald = 17.703$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 13% [$Exp(B) = 1.130$ 95% CI (1.068, 1.197)] for the intention to vote every one unit increase of ideological polarisation. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight for media exposure: $B = 0.535$, $SE = 0.069$, $Wald = 60.453$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 70.8% [$Exp(B) = 1.708$, 95% CI (1.492, 1.955)] for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of media exposure. Therefore, media exposure contributes to the model as well as educational attainment. Namely, the unstandardized Beta weight for educational attainment: $B = 0.325$, $SE = 0.031$, $Wald = 113.196$, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 38.4% [$Exp(B) = 1.304$, 95% CI (1.304, 1.470)] for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of educational attainment. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight of sex: $B =$

297, SE = 0.109, Wald = 7.404, $p < .01$. The estimated odds ratio favour an increase of 34.6% [Exp (B) = 1.346, 95% CI (1.087, 1.668)] for the intention to vote, if this person is a female. Compared to the previous models, the effect of sex became more statistically significant in the last model. In addition, the unstandardized Beta weight for age: B = 0.024, SE = 0.003, Wald = 50.667, $p < .001$. The estimated odds ratio favoured an increase of 2.5% [Exp (B) = 1.025, 95% CI (1.018, 1.032)] for the intention to vote every one unit of increase of age. After adding media exposure to the model, the estimated odds ratios of all the other variables decreased except for sex and age. All the discussed statistics can also be found in table 4. To conclude, affective polarisation has a significant positive effect on the intention to vote, even after controlling for ideological polarisation and media exposure. Therefore, hypothesis four is accepted.

Table 4

Binary Logistic Regression Model 4

| | B | SE | OR | 95% CI for OR | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Affective polarisation | 0.021 | 0.002 | 1.021*** | 1.017 | 1.025 |
| Educational attainment | 0.325 | 0.031 | 1.384*** | 1.304 | 1.470 |
| Sex | 0.297 | 0.109 | 1.346** | 1.087 | 1.668 |
| Age | 0.024 | 0.003 | 1.025*** | 1.018 | 1.032 |
| Ideological polarisation | 0.123 | 0.029 | 1.130*** | 1.068 | 1.197 |
| Media exposure | 0.535 | 0.069 | 1.708*** | 1.492 | 1.955 |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Comparing results

In order to compare the effects of the independent variables of the fourth model, the effects for one standard deviation will be compared. For the calculations and the table, see appendix C. Based on these calculations, it can be concluded that educational attainment has the largest effect on the intention to vote. Besides, the results show that affective polarisation also has a large impact on the intention to vote. It can be concluded that affective polarisation has a larger effect on the intention to vote than ideological polarisation. However, this difference is not substantial. It is also worth mentioning that media exposure has also an effect on the intention to vote as well as age. The smallest effect on the intention to vote is the effect of sex, this can also be seen in the fact that sex is less statistically significant compared to the other variables (see table 4).

Conclusion and discussion

First, the two research questions will be answered and recommendations for future research will be made. After that, the limitations of this research will be discussed as well as the strengths.

Conclusion and research recommendations

In order to answer the first research question, the relationship between ideological- and affective polarisation was studied. It can be concluded that these manifestations of polarisation do not relate to each other (measured at the individual level) within the context of the 2020 presidential election of the United States of America. This is in contrast to the expectation that ideological- and affective polarisation would be weakly linked to each other (*hypothesis 1*). These findings are not in line with the findings of Lelkes (2021), Bougher (2017), Webster and Abromowitz (2017) and to some degree to Reiljan (2020). These scholars namely argue that there is a close connection between ideological- and affective polarisation. According to them, affective polarisation has namely ideological underpinnings. The results presented in the previous section are more in line with research conducted by Ygengar and colleagues (2012): ideological- and affective polarisation are not or just weakly linked to each other. It is namely possible to have negative feelings towards the out-group, even if there is no change in policy stands between the political parties (Mason, 2015).

In order to answer the second research question, the relationship between on one hand ideological polarisation and affective polarisation and on the other hand the intention to vote was investigated. The results show that ideological polarisation (*hypothesis 2*) and affective polarisation (*hypothesis 3a*) both have a positive effect on the intentions to vote. Even after taking ideological polarisation (*hypothesis 3b*) and media exposure (*hypothesis 4*) into account, affective polarisation still influences the intention to vote in a positive way. The results show that educational attainment has the greatest effect on the intention to vote. It can be concluded that people who are higher educated compared to lower educated people, are more likely to intent to vote. It is plausible that higher educated citizens are more able to recognize injunctive norms on how a good citizen ought to participate in political life, because they learned this from formal schooling procedures. Therefore, higher educated people might be more likely to intent to vote (Gerber & Rogers, 2009). It is interesting and relevant to conduct more research about educational attainment and the intention to vote. Because the results show that the effect of educational attainment on the intention to vote, is the most substantial effect.

In addition, affective polarisation also influences the intention to vote for quite some extent. The results provide evidence for the argument that people are drawn to the ballot boxes because they view politics with affective glasses on. People then intent to vote because the intergroup conflict is deep and it is important for someone's self-image not to lose the election to the out-group (Abromowitz & Saunders, 2008; Ward & Travits, 2019; Crepaz et al., 2014; Mayer, 2017 and Hartefield & Wagner, n.d.). Affective polarisation has a larger impact on the intention to vote of Americans during the presidential election of 2020, compared to ideological polarisation. However, it must be noted that the difference between the effect for one standard deviation of affective polarisation and one standard deviation of ideological polarisation is not striking.

In research conducted by Abromowitz and Saunders (2008), a significant effect on the probability of voting was only found for affective polarisation and not for ideological polarisation. However, the results of this thesis provide evidence that ideological polarisation also influences the intention to vote. This is in contrast to scholars who argued that ideological polarisation depresses voter-turnouts (Fiorina et al., 2015; Rogowski, 2014). According to them, citizens stay at home if ideological conflict increases and candidates ideologies become more extreme. Citizens located around the political centre therefore consider both candidates as not enough appealing to go vote (Fiorina et al., 2015). The findings relating to ideological polarisation are more in line with research conducted by Kleiner (2019). Kleiner's findings namely indicate that ideological polarisation energizes the electorate to vote. This can be explained by the notion that people who are highly ideologically polarised are also more insecure about changing norms, values and policies after the election. This form of deprivation energises citizens to vote (Kleiner, 2019).

In the fourth model, media exposure was added as a control variable. The estimated odds ratio of ideological- and affective polarisation slightly decreased, after additionally controlling for media exposure. This means that part of the effect of ideological polarisation can be explained by media exposure. Research namely found that due to greater media penetration and media choice, individuals ideologically select media according to their predispositions. This process can lead to more ideological polarisation at the individual level (Melki & Pickering, 2014).

In addition, it is possible that the estimated odds ratio of affective polarization decreased due to the negativity bias of the media. As described in the literature section, the more people are exposed to negative media content, the more negative feelings they hold

towards the out-group party (Ygengar et al, 2012). However, the estimated odds ratio of affective polarisation did not drop to a large extent. It is for example possible that people gain knowledge from exposure to the media. Exposure to news outlets with high levels of political content namely contributes to the gain of knowledge and increases the intention to vote of people. Exposure to news outlets with less political content has either no effects or slightly positive effects, depending on the type of content (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006). This process also possibly explains the decrease of the estimated odds ratio of educational attainment after including media exposure in the model. For future research it would be interesting to focus on exploring the relationship between media exposure and the intention to vote. The results namely demonstrate that media exposure explains part of the previous measured effects of the other variables. This is in contrast to what happened with the estimated odds ratio's of sex and age. After controlling for media exposure, the estimated odds ratio's namely increased. People who are older, are more likely to intend to vote compared to younger people. This has also been consistent finding in many years of research (Goerres, 2007). Higher voting participation among older people can be explained by the fact that older citizens tend to habituate voting and conform to the growing subjective norm of voting during their lifetime (Goerres, 2007). The results also show that women are more likely to intend to vote than man. This is interesting because the act of voting is fairly equally distributed among men and women (Abendschön & Steinmetz, 2014). It is interesting to address this point in future research. However, it must be noted that age and sex influence the intention to vote less substantial than the other variables based on the results.

Limitations

First, ground need to be gained in the operationalisation and measurement of polarisation in general. As stated in the introduction, polarisation is a phenomena that prevails at the macro level of society. However, in most of the literature as well as in this thesis, polarisation is measured at the micro level. This might compromise the validity and reliability of this study and other studies about polarisation. Despite this shortcoming, the conducted research about the relationship between ideological- and affective polarisation at the individual level on the intention to vote, gives meaningful insights in the micro mechanisms influencing voting behaviour during the presidential election of 2020 in America.

Besides the limitation of the micro measurement of polarisation, the current operationalisation of ideological polarisation has its shortcomings too. Ideological polarisation is in the used literature measured as the consistency of policy stands about

immigration, health care, economy, abortion, same-sex marriage and gun control (Mason, 2018; Mason, 2015). As described in the method section, the ANES 20 time series data does not contain questions about all these topics that can be coded into a three-points scale. Therefore, the questions about economy and gun control are replaced by questions about border control and environmental issues. It is unfortunately that questions about economy and gun control could not be used, because the Democratic- and Republican Party differs to a great extent on these topics and could provide valuable information about ideological polarisation in America (Lindaman & Haider-Markel, 2002; Democratic Party, 2020). Research did, however, show that there is a widening gap in republican and democratic views on climate change and border control (Dunlap, 2008; Hammer & Kafura, 2019). So, adding these policy topics to the ideological polarisation scale has also its strengths. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the question about immigration and border control are quite similar, which impacts the validity and reliability of the operationalisation of ideological polarisation. Besides, the individual questions about the policy stands are not distributed normally. Most respondents are in line with the democratic stand and fewer respondents agree with the republican point of view. It is possible that more nuance would be measured if the question was operationalised as a five-points scale and not as a three-points scale.

In addition, as briefly discussed in the section about the descriptive statistics, has 93.4% of the respondents the intention to vote. Just 6.6% of the respondents has no intention to vote. It is possible that this distribution has influenced the reliability and validity of the results. Despite of the very strong relationship between pre-elections voting intentions and the actual vote choice (Abromowitz & Saunders, 2008), has measuring the intention to vote of citizens its shortcomings. It is namely possible that people say that they have the intention to vote but eventually do not go to the ballot box for several reasons (Achen & Blais, 2015). On the other hand, respondents might say they intent to vote because this answer is more socially accepted because voting is a injunctive norm (Gerber & Rogers, 2009; Goerres, 2007). In addition, people who have the intention to vote, might be more likely to participate in surveys than people who do not. These limitations can more or less be prevented by studying direct voter turnouts. Unfortunately, actual voting behaviour was not part of the used data release of ANES (ANES, 2021). Finally, this research could be improved by adding partisan identity strength and political identity alignment as control variables. Previous research namely concluded that these mechanisms influence affective polarisation and political participation. Unfortunately, the variables who measure these concepts were not available in the used data

release of the ANES data. The ANES namely released the data is several waves because they recently ended the data collection (ANES, 2021).

Strengths

Using such recent collected data has its practical difficulties as described above, but it also has its strengths. The ANES 2020 time series provides insights in the views, beliefs, attitudes and emotions of American citizens before and after the presidential election of 2020. This is valuable and interesting because the presidential election of 2020 wrote history in several aspects: varying from historically high voter-turn outs to claiming that the election was stolen (Grynbaum, 2020; NRC, 2021; Desilver, 2021). By studying mechanism at the individual level, macro phenomena such as voter turnouts can be better understood. This thesis contributes to the knowledge about what determines voter turnouts by examining ideological- and affective polarisation at the individual level. Another strength of this study is that the analytical- and empirical differences between the two manifestations of polarization are more deeply explored in comparison to other studies. The lights are namely shed on different perspectives towards ideological polarisation and how the inability to reach consensus led to the development of a new concept: affective polarisation. In addition, the ongoing debate about the ideological underpinnings of affective polarisation is widely discussed. The exploration of these concepts provides a clear framework for the rest of the conducted research. A methodological strength of this thesis is that media exposure is included as a control variable. Media exposure namely explains part of the effects of ideological polarisation, affective polarisation and educational attainment. If there was not additionally controlled for media exposure, higher estimated odds ratio were ascribed to the two manifestations of polarisation and educational attainment.

To conclude, this thesis contributes to the debate about whether ideological polarisation and affective polarisation are linked to each other. Besides, the underreached topic of voter intention is explored in relation to both ideological- and affective polarisation as well as media exposure. Polarisation in general is seen as one of the main challenges of the United States of America. Pluralistic values, social trust and respect among citizens and political leaders are crumbling down, while a democracy should promote these values (Hernandez et al., 2021). In four years, there is a new presidential election in the United States of America. The next presidential election will learn us whether ideological- and affective polarisation will increase the intention to vote again or that the wall between the Democratic- and Republican Party and its members is torn down.

Literature

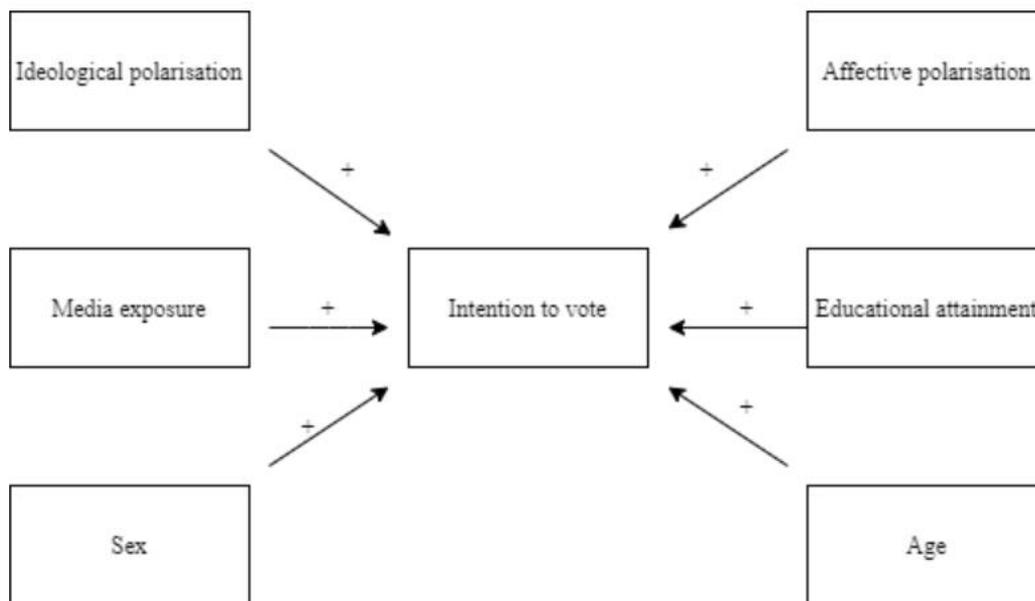
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Appendix A.**Path model****Figure A1***Path Model*

Appendix B.**Spearman' correlation between ideological- and affective polarisation****Table B1**

*Spearman's Correlation between Ideological Polarisation
and Affective Polarisation*

| | Affective polarisation |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Ideological polarisation | 0.012 |

Appendix C.

Calculations of the effects of the independent variables for one standard deviation

The calculations are based on the estimated odds ratio of the independent variables from model 4 (see table 4) and the standard deviation from the descriptive table (see table 1).

Formula: estimated odds ratio^{s.d.}

Effect affective polarisation for one s.d. = $1.021^{30.34212} = 1.879$

Effect ideological polarisation for one s.d. = $1.130^{2.05097} = 1.285$

Effect media exposure for one s.d. = $1.708^{0.83091} = 1.560$

Effect educational attainment for one s.d. = $1.384^{2.02671} = 1.932$

Effect sex for one s.d. = $1.346^{0.49875} = 1.160$

Effect age for one s.d. = $1.025^{17.03761} = 1.523$

Table C1

Effect for One Standard Deviation (s.d.)

| Name independent variable | Effect for one s.d. |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Affective polarisation | 1.879 |
| Ideological polarisation | 1.285 |
| Media exposure | 1.560 |
| Educational attainment | 1.932 |
| Sex | 1.160 |
| Age | 1.523 |