



Political Polarization in the Social Justice Pathway

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INTRODUCTION

Why are Palo Alto High School classrooms politically polarized?

- *The political makeup of Palo Alto contributes to a classroom that is majority liberal*
- *The subject matter of the Social Justice Pathway attracts students with a liberal bias*
- *The sociological group dynamics of students in the classroom keep alternative political points of view from being shared*
- *On par with the sociological theory of in-group and out-groups, students fear sharing a political point of view that may cause social repercussions*

Why is political polarization an issue?

- *Students in the political majority are not challenged, and students in the political minority may feel alienated*
- *Students exposed to more political diversity become more politically active*

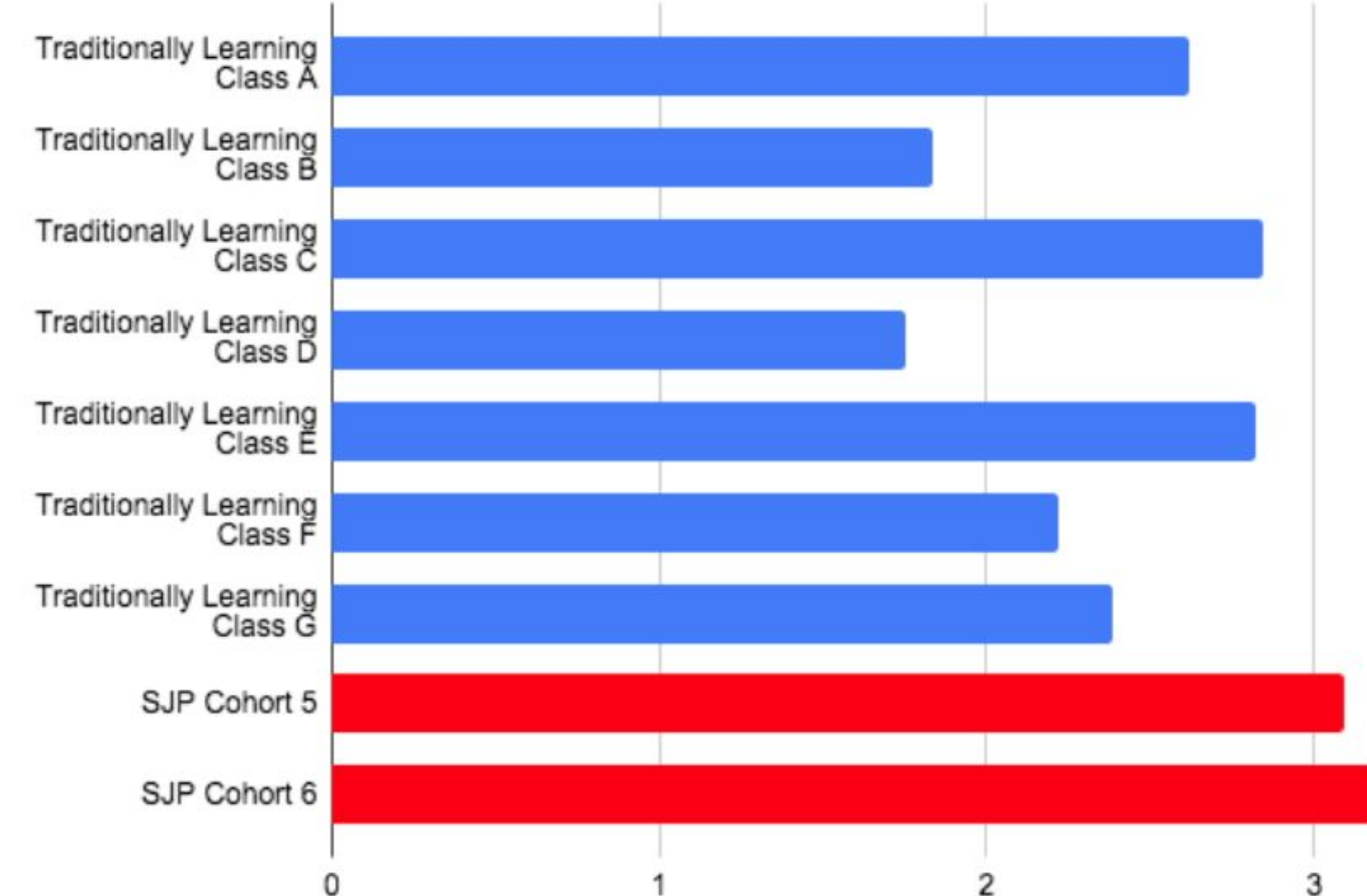
CONCLUSIONS

- A large majority of Juniors and Seniors at Palo Alto High School are politically liberal*.
- Social Justice Pathway students were more notably more likely than other students to be politically liberal*.
- Students in the Social Justice were more likely to agree with a political proposal given to them if the author shared their views (or disagree if the author did not)
- This is theorized to mean that Social Justice students are more politically polarized than their peers, and less open minded about perspectives that don't come from sources with their same political views.
- Social Justice classes proved to carry the most "polarized" metrics, however, his pattern of support was seen all but two of the classes surveyed.

* Students reporting they were most likely to vote Democrat or Green in the future were labeled liberal, while students reporting they were more likely to vote Republican or Independent in the future were labeled conservative

DATA AND FINDINGS

Mean "Blind Party Alliance"



RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

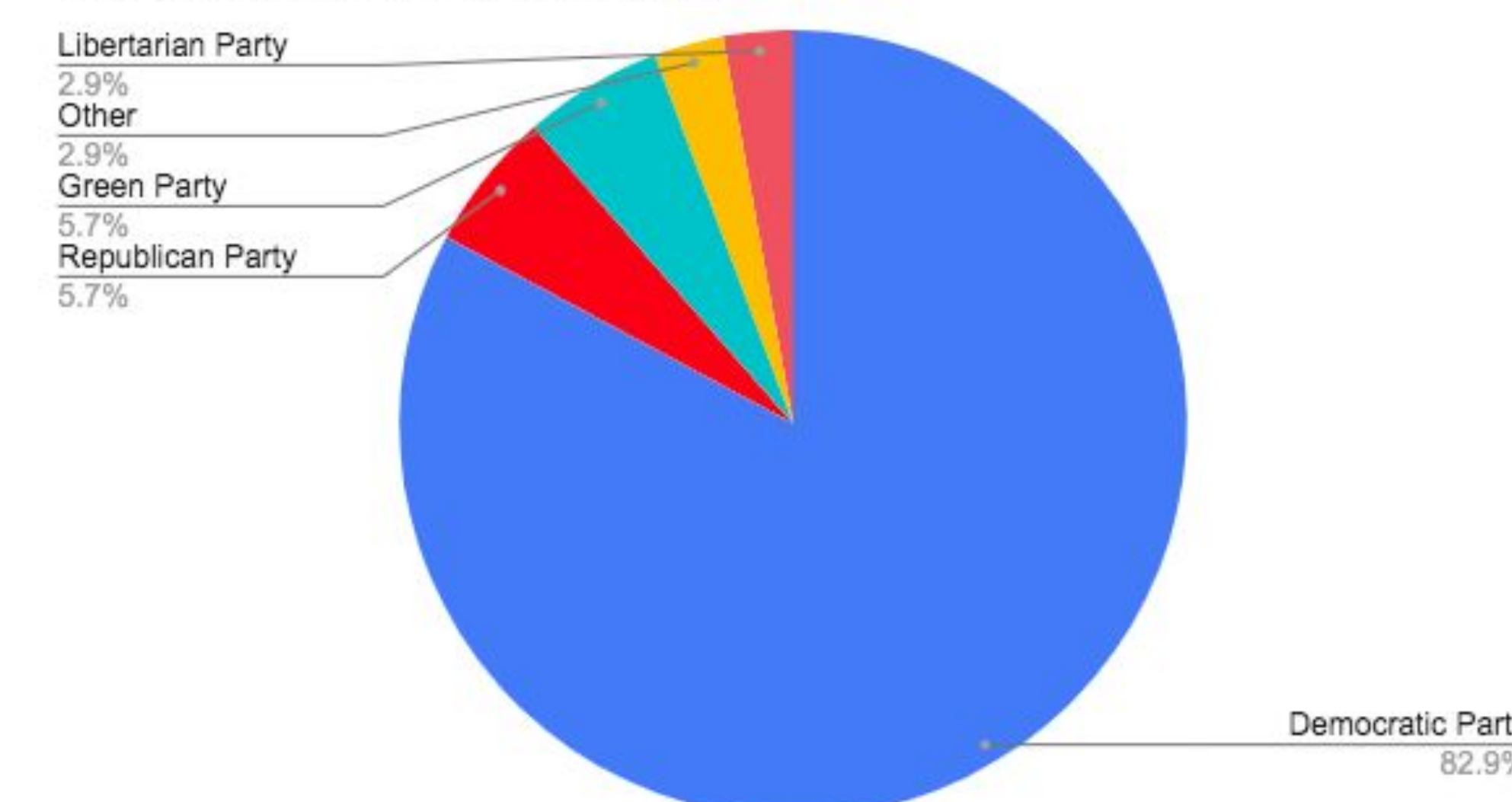
Phase I:

- *Survey both Social Justice and traditional classrooms:*
 - *Ask students if they agree with a neutral policy proposal when it is marked as authored by either a democratic or republican senator, and ask their party affiliation*
 - *Identify which classrooms have the greatest and least correlation between the agreement of the students and their party affiliation as means to measure their effective polarization*

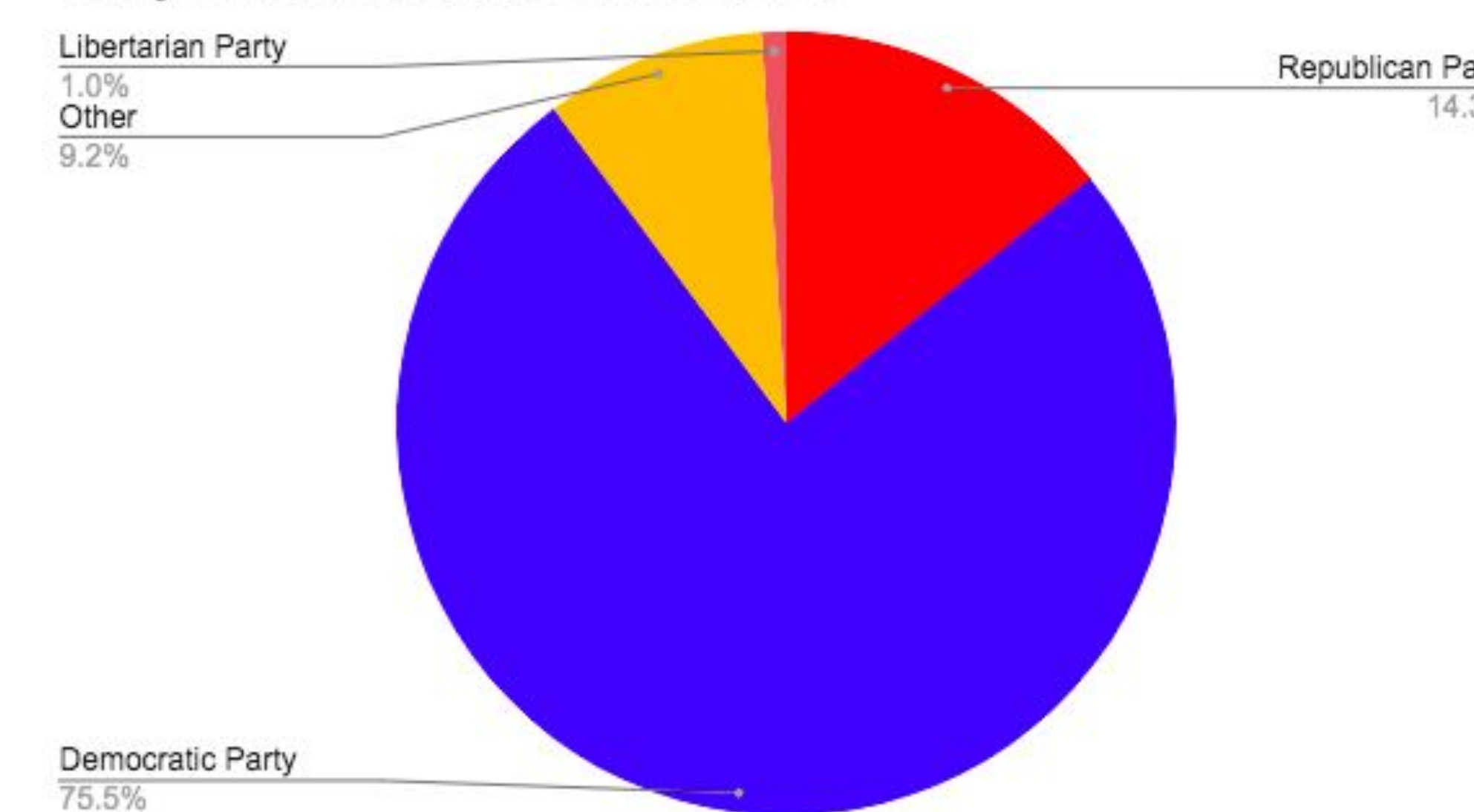
Phase II:

- *Review Literature Review to discover ways to combat political polarization*
- *Interview Stanford Instructor Lisa Medoff*
- *Apply researcher's knowledge as a Social Justice Pathway student*
- *Create report on how the Social Justice Pathway can improve*

Party Affiliation Social Justice



Party Affiliation Non Social Justice



NEXT STEPS

Because of the Coronavirus, the research was unable to complete her initially planned Phase II of research:

- *1) Interview teachers with students who have the greatest and least effective polarization, 2) Find similarities in the classroom environments with the greatest and least effective polarization, and 3) Make this information available to Palo Alto High School teachers*

If given the opportunity to continue this project, the researcher would like to complete the original methodology.

IMPLICATIONS

- Students cannot represent the ideals of social justice while also being more politically polarized than their peers.
- Changemaking relies on cooperation, so it is important that students working to create Social Justice are open minded.
- This research also fits in with a greater national pattern of communities with large political political majorities becoming more polarized than intellectually diverse communities. This is because there is less interaction between people with different viewpoints.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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