Information Search and Political Ideology: Examining How an Individual's Political Ideology Relates to the Category and Depth of the Political Information they Pursue

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INFORMATION SEARCH AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY:

Examining How an Individual's Political Ideology Relates to the Category and Depth of the

Political Information they Pursue

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Abstract

The expansion of news media in television and online allows the public to tailor their consumption of political news to their specific interests. Understanding how the public engages in political information search with respect to their political identities can provide insight into the type and amount of information an individual pursues before making a political decision. The present study examines how people of various political ideologies gather information related to political issues. Participants completed surveys gauging their attitudes toward a number of political policy issues following a task in which they were allowed to select political issue topics and control the amount of information they read about each. Of primary interest was how an individual's political ideology influenced which policy issues they selected, and the amount of information participants read before making a decision. The results suggest that as an individual's ideological extremity increases, they become more likely to select ingroup issues, or issues that are typically supported by their political ideology. Additionally, individuals who identify as liberal reviewed more information than their conservative counterparts before making a decision regarding political issues. Finally, preliminary evidence suggests that individuals who identify as moderate sampled an array of political policy issues which was more diverse than liberals, but not more diverse than conservatives.

Keywords: information search, political polarization, political ideology, ingroup, outgroup, political cognition

Information Search and Political Ideology: Examining How an Individual's Political Ideology Relates to the Category and Depth of the Political Information they Pursue

In this digital age, there is no shortage of diverse political media available to the American people. Over the last 20 years, an expansive list of social media and news sites have been made available online to the public, providing consumers with the opportunity to customize the news they receive. To better understand the influence of consumer choice on information gathering, it is crucial to investigate how the American people interact with political media, given that political beliefs are inexorably tied to their political media exposure (Stroud, 2008). By understanding individuals' information search behavior with regard to political media, it may be possible to predict their political ideologies. Conversely, by understanding an individual's political ideology, it may be possible to predict their political information search behavior. Insight into information gathering is also potentially useful to news media and/or political campaigns, as it could afford the opportunity to better communicate political information to the viewing and voting public.

Throughout this paper, the term "information search" is used to refer to both the type (in this case, liberal or conservative policy issues) and the amount of political information sought out by individuals. The term "ingroup position" describes an issue with a political preference congruent to the political ideology of an individual. An example of the selection of ingroup media would be the act of a liberal choosing to read an article which supports abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). An outgroup issue position is one which does not align with an individual's political ideology. If a conservative were to choose to read an article which supported abolishing ICE, they would be consuming a piece of outgroup media. While objective journalism exists within news media and plays an important role in American politics,

consideration of objective journalism is not relevant to this study given that an investigation into how individuals' political ideologies correspond with their information search behavior as it relates to ingroup and outgroup issues requires the use of partisan issues/sources.

While an individual's party identification (Democratic or Republican) correlates with their own political ideology (liberal and conservative, respectively), it is important to note that these labels are not synonymous. Though ideology often correlates with party identification— with liberals tending to vote for Democrats and conservatives tending to vote for Republicans (a trend which is especially visible in contemporary American politics) (Jost et al., 2009)—liberals are not always Democrats (Rhoden, 2013), nor are conservatives always Republican (Adams, 2001). While liberalism is a left-wing political ideology which favors an interventionist government, and conservatism is a right-wing political ideology which favors a small government, the Democratic and Republican parties are coalitions of state parties which generally agree on a set of policy issues, but vary in ideology. For example, southern Democrats within the United States are traditionally conservative, while northern Democrats are traditionally liberal (Adams, 2001). This study investigates broad ideological differences between individuals, and does not directly examine political information search behavior as it relates to party identification.

Motivated Reasoning & Political Information Search

Motivated reasoning occurs when unconscious attitudes or emotions influence people to think about and approach political issues in a way which supports their preexisting views (Kunda, 1990). This bias for individuals to prefer and pursue confirmatory information exists within the realm of politics (Kunda, 1990; Kirschenbaum, 1992; Strickland et al., 2011; Peterson & Iyengar, 2021). When investigating the foundation of partisan preferences for information

sources, Peterson and Iyengar (2021) found that partisans are motivated to pursue information which bolsters their own ideological stance. In addition to finding that decision making is correlated with information search strategies, Kirschenbaum (1992) suggests that when reviewing any given topic, individuals engage in motivated political information search and this occurs independent of their political expertise. Furthermore, in an online experiment investigating selective exposure and attitude polarization in the Netherlands, Trilling et al. (2016) found that political ideology correlates with individuals' information search behavior even within multi-party systems. There is widespread support for the concept that partisans are motivated to engage in styles of information search which yield information that reinforces their own partisan allegiance, suggesting a preference for ingroup information exists across individuals of all political identities (Strickland et al., 2011; Peterson & Iyengar, 2021).

A bias for information sources consistent with one's own political leanings is also observed when the public is interacting with online political media (Garz et al., 2019). Garz and colleagues (2019) examined the relationship between participants' Facebook engagement, and the political congeniality of the posts they viewed. They found that user engagement was highest with relation to congenial posts, which supports the concept of an ingroup bias within social media activity. Investigation into partisan selective exposure by Stroud (2008) develops the context provided by Garz et al. further, with the finding that an individual's political ideology motivates their selection of political media, and that a preference for ideologically ingroup content is observed across all media types. Rather than exposing the public to a wider array of political viewpoints, the massive proliferation of online news media has led to an increase in individuals' preference for ingroup news sources, regardless of their political ideologies (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2008). Iyengar and Hahn (2009) presented identical news stories to their

participants, and attributed each story to either Fox News, CNN, or NPR. They found that

Democrats and Republicans both preferred to consume these news stories from an ideologically

congruent source (Fox News for Republicans, and CNN and NPR for Democrats). These

findings that both Democrats and Republicans prefer ideologically congruent sources of news

media lays the groundwork for our study, by indicating that a preference exists across political

identities to consume media from sources which individuals traditionally support. The present

investigation goes beyond this finding to examine whether individuals also display a bias for

selecting discrete political issues which an individual's ideological ingroup traditionally

supports.

The findings of Iyengar and Hahn (2009) extend beyond issue preference and into issue

avoidance. Their data suggests that liberals, conservatives, Democrats, and Republicans avoid

news media associated with their opponent groups. This is true for both controversial news

policy issues and mundane news (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Jost & Krochik, 2014). Importantly,

recent studies have shown that liberals are just as likely to avoid outgroup political information

as their conservative counterparts, with the results of Frimer, Skikita, and Motyl (2017) being

particularly notable. They presented liberal and conservative participants with the opportunity to

listen to the opposing side's viewpoints regarding same-sex marriage in exchange for monetary

renumeration ($3). While it must be acknowledged that $3 may not have been a sufficient

amount to motivate individuals to listen to an opposing viewpoint, it is noteworthy that the

majority of participants actively avoided listening to the opposing viewpoint and sacrificed their

monetary incentive. These findings suggest that when engaging in information search,

individuals display a preference for ingroup content, and that both liberals and conservatives are

equally motivated to avoid opposing viewpoints.

Prior research has primarily focused on the broad categories of liberals and conservatives, which is limiting because there may be differences in information search behavior between individuals who weakly identify with their political party and individuals who identify strongly with their political party. Research investigating ideological extremity is limited, but indicates that individuals with the strongest attitudes regarding political issues are the most motivated to maintain their beliefs (Strickland et al., 2011). Additional research, such as Iyengar and Hahn's (2009) finding that partisans who were observed to be more politically engaged were more likely to select articles attributed to ingroup sources (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009), indicate that there may be a relationship between ideological extremity and the types of information individuals prefer. In the present study, the focus was on not only liberals and conservatives, but also moderates. Because political moderates do not explicitly identify themselves with a political party, they cannot engage in *partisan* motivated reasoning and information search behavior. While moderates can display motivated reasoning on issue positions, and can display partisan leanings (ANES, 2019), this study did not evaluate the partisan lean of moderates within the self-report identity measure provided to participants and as a result, the potential partisan preference of moderates is not relevant to the findings within this study. However, comparing the information search behavior of moderates with the information search behavior of liberals and conservatives could provide valuable context for the behaviors of these two polarized groups. Because moderates are low in extremity in terms of ideological identification, it is likely that they engage with and process media differently making them a potentially useful comparison group. Because moderates cannot be motivated by ideological information search behavior, they will likely select a more diverse sample of political issues relative to individuals who identify as liberal or conservative. As such, this study's investigations into ideological extremity and differences

across ideological categories benefits from the inclusion of an ideological midpoint, such as moderates, as a comparison group.

Ideological Differences in Cognition

Liberals and conservatives engage in different cognitive approaches when presented with information or tasks (Jost et al., 2003; Jost et al., 2009; Shook & Fazio, 2009; Deppe et al., 2015; Lau et al., 2017), and the political ideology of an individual influences their cognitive approach when presented with political information and media (Lau et al., 2017). Despite ample evidence that political ideology correlates with ingroup media preferences, information search behavior goes beyond just the source of the information and also involves the amount of information that individuals desire to be exposed to when considering a policy issue. Most studies on information search have only examined the issues and sources that individuals attend to, which is problematic as there might be substantive individual and group differences in the degree to which information is read or considered prior to determining one's stance on an issue.

While no research has directly investigated how ideology correlates with depth of information pursued, there is research which investigates ideological differences in decision making behavior which can provide useful insight into information search. For example, Deppe et al. (2015) presented participants with the Cognitive Reflection Test, which is a three-item test which measures an individual's tendency to engage in reflective decision making. Participants were presented with questions that upon first glance have a very simple and intuitive (but ultimately incorrect) answer, and a correct answer which requires a deeper level of analysis and reflection to reach. Results from the Cognitive Reflection Test indicate that liberal participants were more reflective than their conservative counterparts, who engaged in more intuitive thinking. These results indicate that liberals may be more likely to thoroughly consider

information prior to making a decision and, therefore, may be more likely to pursue deeper levels

of information when engaging in political information search. Supporting this concept of

ideological asymmetries in openness to information, Van Hiel et al. (2000) administered

questionnaires to their participants which measured their political ideologies and levels of

openness to experience using a series of Likert scales. Openness to experience is one factor of

the "Big Five", a general framework of personality factors which rates individuals on their

Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness (McCrae, 2008).

Their results indicated a negative correlation between openness to experience and ideological

conservatism. This finding may indicate that liberals are more open to review novel information

and ideas than their conservative counterparts. Additionally, based on a review of relevant

literature, Jost and Krochik (2014) suggest that ideological conservatives are more likely than

liberals to process information selectively, while liberals are more likely than conservatives to

expose themselves to a wide range of opinions. After administering a large-scale internet study

which examined the ideological differences in participant confidence in both their political and

apolitical attitude responses, Jost and Krochik (2014) found conservatives to be more

subjectively certain in their attitudes than liberals. This could suggest that they may be more

likely to engage in decision making without pursuing additional information or context.

       Of key relevance to the investigation of political ideology to depth of information search

are the findings of Shook and Fazio (2009), who provided participants with a computer game

which presented novel stimuli and had them learn whether these stimuli produced net positive or

negative results. Learning was evaluated by observing participant behavior when approaching or

avoiding these stimuli over the course of the game. Their *BeanFest* is a gamified task which

allows participants to approach or avoid certain beans (which differ in appearance) and which

either increased (positive result) or decreased (negative result) the participant's total points.

Participants' goals were to accrue points to win the game. Though overall learning was stable

across ideologies, when compared to liberal participants, conservatives exhibited a stronger

asymmetry in learning in which they learned negative stimuli better than they learned positive

stimuli. This finding highlights a cognitive asymmetry that may exist between liberals and

conservatives. Furthermore, liberals were more open to experience and conservative participants

sampled fewer stimuli than liberal participants, indicating a correlation between participants'

political ideology and exploration within the game. That liberal participants exposed themselves

to a wider array of novel stimuli than their conservative counterparts has important implications

for the relationship between political ideology and the depth of information individuals consume.

This finding could indicate a broad tendency among liberals to pursue more information than

their conservative counterparts, which would suggest that liberals are more likely to review more

information before making political decisions than their conservative counterparts and thus will

engage in deeper levels of information search behavior.

Overview of the Present Research

The present work used an online survey to examine the relationship between political

ideology and information gathering behavior with the goal of answering the following question:

Does political ideology influence the policy issues people read about and the amount of

information they pursue?

It was hypothesized that—when compared to individuals who identify as conservative—

individuals who identify as liberal would review more information before making a decision

regarding political issues (H1). Given that conservatives have been found to rely more heavily on

their own intuition when making a political decision relative to liberals (Deppe et al., 2015), and

given that liberals are more likely to expose themselves to a wider array of novel stimuli than

conservatives (Shook & Fazio, 2009), it logically follows that liberals may pursue a larger

amount of contextual information gathering prior to making a political decision. Findings which

indicate that liberals display more openness to both experience and information than

conservatives, who engage in more intuitive thinking (Van Hiel et al., 2000; Shook & Fazio,

2009; Jost et al., 2009; Jost & Krochik, 2014), also support the theory that liberals are likely to

pursue a larger amount of information than conservatives. The present study will formally test

this possibility by providing participants the opportunity to read more or less information

regarding a policy issue prior to taking a survey gauging their opinions on that issue.

Further, it was hypothesized that individuals who identify as strongly liberal or strongly

conservative would be more likely to select issues that are relevant to their political ideology

than individuals who have weak political affiliations (H2). There is robust widespread support

for the concept of ingroup political bias within both liberals and conservatives (Stroud, 2008;

Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Jost & Krochik, 2014; Lau et al., 2017; Garz et al., 2019). However,

these studies only investigate ingroup bias as it relates to the categories of liberals and

conservatives. Variations in ideological strength exist within these groups, and it is unclear how

ingroup bias within strongly ideological individuals compares to the ingroup bias displayed by

moderately and weakly ideological individuals. As such, this study strives to clarify how ingroup

bias fluctuates as a function of their ideological extremity.

Finally, it was hypothesized that individuals with moderate political ideologies would

select a more diverse array of policy issues than liberals and conservatives (H3). Despite a well-

established ingroup bias for the source of news media, it is unclear whether the issues that

individuals choose to engage with are also issues largely associated with their ingroup vs. their

outgroup. Given that moderates fall between liberals and conservatives on the political spectrum, it seems probable that they would select the most balanced array of political policy issues.

Methods

Participants

The initial dataset included 550 students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln who participated in exchange for course credit. Thirty-eight participants were removed from the sample for either not completing the study or for not demonstrating sufficient comprehension of the instructions as described below. The final dataset consisted of 512 undergraduate students (306 females, 200 males, and 4 gender non-conforming; age range 17-35, $M = 19.4$, $SD = 2.1$). All participants were naïve as to the purpose of the research and were told that the study was focused on how people behave when presented with political issues. The study was completed in a single 30-minute session, and was available to participants between November 2-27, 2020. Participants were politically diverse but leaned liberal, with 266 (52%) identifying as liberal, 82 (16%) identifying as moderate, 147 (29%) identifying as conservative, and 17 (3%) identifying as 'other'. Participant ideology was measured on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating the participant was *Very Liberal,* 4 indicating *Moderate,* and 7 indicating *Very Conservative* ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.81$). Responses of *Other* were ignored in this measure because their ideology could not be determined.

Procedure

The study was completed online through Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com) and participants were provided with a link to the study after initially signing up through the Psychology or Political Science subject pools at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After providing informed consent, participants were directed to an instructions page where they were

provided basic directions on how to complete the information search task. Participants were informed that they would be given a list of six policy issues (Abortion: Pro-Choice, Black Lives Matter, Green New Deal, 2nd Amendment Rights, Border Security, and Law Enforcement Protection) to choose from and that for each policy issue they would be presented information in sequence, without the ability to go back and read previous pages. They were allowed to select any policy issue, in any order, with the instruction that once they felt they had read all that they wanted to know about that issue, they could advance to an opinion survey for that topic. All participants were required to complete a minimum of four policy issues, though they had the option to complete five or six if they desired. After selecting a policy issue, participants were provided with a brief definition of the selected issue. They could then choose to read more about their chosen policy issue, or simply skip to the policy issue's survey. There were a total of four screens participants could read through for each policy issue (see Methods section - *Within a Policy Issue: Text and the Read More Option*). Participants read through information screens, with an option to proceed to the policy issue survey available at the bottom of each screen. They were explicitly instructed that once they had proceeded to a survey, they could not go back to read more about the policy issue. Participants were then presented with a short list of questions to ensure that they retained and understood the initial instructions. Participants were removed from the final dataset if they answered at least two of the five instructional quiz questions incorrectly ($n = 38$). Following the short instructional quiz, they were allowed to proceed with the study.

After participants had selected their chosen policy issues and completed the related surveys, they were presented with the Wilson Patterson Attitude Inventory (Wilson & Patterson, 1968) and the Society Works Best Instrument (Smith et al., 2011) which are measures of the

political ideology of participants (see *Measures of Political Ideology* below). The presentation of

these measures was counterbalanced across participants. Participants then completed a set of

standard demographic questions (e.g., age, gender), followed by political demographic questions

(e.g., ideology, participation). Finally, participants were presented with a series of questions

investigating their voting attitudes and behavior with regard to the 2020 Presidential Election.

Participants were then debriefed, and awarded course credit.

Materials and Measures

Selecting a Policy Issue

Participants were presented with six policy issues to choose from. The order of policy

issues was randomized across participants each time a choice was presented. The available

policy issues constituted three issues that liberals traditionally support (Pro-Choice, Black Lives

Matter, and Green New Deal) and three issues that conservatives traditionally support (2nd

Amendment Rights, Border Security, and Law Enforcement Protection). Of these six policy

issues, participants had to complete a minimum of four to fulfill the study requirements. Once a

participant selected their chosen policy issue and completed the related reading and survey

questions, they were directed back to the policy issue list, which only contained the remaining

policy issues. As participants were only required to complete a minimum of four policy issues

(though they could choose to complete all six), they were provided with a *Proceed to*

Questionnaires option within the policy issue list after completing their fourth policy issue

survey. The mean number of issues selected across all participants—with a minimum of four and

a maximum of six to choose from—was 4.42 issues ($SD = 0.75$).

Within a Policy Issue: Text and the Read More Option

After selecting each policy issue, participants were presented with text which provided

information relevant to their choice. Each policy issue was accompanied by 4 sections of

reading, presented one at a time (see Appendix 1). Each section of text was experimenter

generated and was sourced from a combination of online news sources, court cases, and

legislation. The first block of text was a short definition or description of their chosen issue. The

definitions were selected to be straightforward and nonpartisan. After reading this definition,

participants could choose to either select the *Read More* button to learn more about the policy

issue, or the *Skip to Topic Survey* button to bypass additional information and provide their

opinions regarding the policy issue right away. If participants chose to read more about the

policy issue they were presented with the legislation section, where they were given information

regarding laws and/or court cases relevant to their chosen policy issue. The third section of text

was labeled *PRO*, and contained legal arguments and/or opinions which supported the chosen

policy issue. The final text section, *CON*, contained legal arguments and/or opinions which

opposed the chosen policy issue. Each of the six policy issues had four pages of text, which were

presented in this same order: definition, legislation, pro, con.

Political Issue Surveys

After reading the text for each policy issue selected, participants were presented with a

short survey related to the chosen policy issue. Each section's policy issue survey proceeded in

the same manner. First, participants were presented with a series of four experimenter generated

policy statements related to that issue, two liberal and two conservative (see Appendix 1). These

statements expressed attitudes either in favor of or opposed to the chosen policy issue. For the

2nd Amendment policy issue, an example of a liberal statement is *Private citizens should not be*

allowed to own guns, while an example of a conservative statement is *The right to bear arms is*

crucial for personal self-defense. The order in which these four statements were presented was randomized for each participant and for each political issue. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 was *Strongly Disagree,* 4 was *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, and 7 was *Strongly Agree*. Participants were then asked the following questions, which all utilized 5-point Likert scales to gauge opinion: how familiar they were with the policy issue both before and after selecting it (*1=Extremely familiar, 5=Not familiar at all)*, how confident they were that they understand the policy issue (*1=Extremely confident, 5=Not confident at all)*, the level of understanding the average person should have of the policy issue (*1=Very high, 5= Very low*), and how important they think the policy issue is (*1=Extremely important, 5=Not at all important*).

Measures of Political Identity

Participants completed two measures of political identity, the *Wilson Patterson Attitude Inventory*, and the *Society Works Best Instrument* (Wilson & Patterson, 1968; Smith et al, 2011; see Appendices 3-4). All participants completed both of these measures of political identity, and the order in which they were presented was counterbalanced.

Wilson Patterson Attitude Inventory (Wilson & Patterson, 1968). The Wilson Patterson Attitude Inventory presents participants with a series of political policy issues such as *Evolution, Small Government,* and *Women's Equality.* Participants then record their opinion toward the policy issue on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is *Strongly Oppose,* and 5 is *Strongly Support.* This Wilson Patterson Inventory traditionally has only three response options, but was modified for this study to provide a more precise assessment of participant attitudes. To ensure that policy issues were relevant and up to date, the following issue topics were added: *Black Lives Matter, Gun Control, Defund Police, Qualified Immunity, Medicare for All.*

Society Works Best Instrument (Smith et al, 2011). The Society Works Best Instrument presents participants with a series of binary choices, all preceded by the phrase "Society works best when…". An example of one such binary choice is as follows: *Society works best when our leaders call the shots* versus *Society works best when our leaders are forced to listen to others*. One of the options is considered more consistent with conservative viewpoints while the other is more consistent with liberal viewpoints.

Both the Wilson Patterson Attitude Inventory and the Society Works Best Instrument tap the political affiliation of participants and will be used for additional analyses in the future. However, for the purpose of this study, analysis focuses solely on self-report of political ideology which was deemed more relevant to this investigation.

Demographics

Following the measures of political identity, participants were presented with a set of standard demographics questions (see Appendix 5). These demographics collected information regarding the participants' age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and spoken language.

Self-report Political Demographics

After providing their general demographics, participants were taken to a page where they were able to indicate their political demographics (see Appendix 2). The order in which these questions were presented was randomized for all participants. For the purposes of this study, the most important question was "What is your political orientation?". Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Very Liberal,* to 4 = *Moderate,* to 7 = *Very Conservative,* with an additional *Other* option. This was used as the critical measure of participants' political ideology. The remaining questions in this political demographics section investigated

participants' level of interest in politics, party affiliation, importance of party affiliation to their ideology, primary source of news, and primary news channel.

Voting Behavior

Because this study launched on SONA during the period during and immediately after voting for the 2020 Presidential Election occurred, the final section of this study gathered information relating to voting behavior of the participants. Participants were first asked if they were registered to vote. Participants who answered *Yes* were asked which party they were registered with, while all other participants were asked which party they would choose if they were to register. Participants were able to choose from the following options: Democratic Party, Republican Party, Independent, or Other. The next field required participants to indicate if they intended to vote, or had already voted in the 2020 Presidential Election. Participants who selected *Yes* were asked to indicate which candidate they supported, and were able to choose from *Donald Trump, Joe Biden,* and *Other.* This information was exploratory and collected primarily for future analyses.

Results

All data was recoded, analyzed, and graphed within *R* (www.r-project.org). Linear regressions were conducted using the *lm* function, the one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted using the *aov* function, and post hoc tests for the ANOVA were conducted with the *TukeyHSD* function. Graphs were generated using Tidyverse's ggplot2 package within R.

Recoding

Recoding for Hypothesis 1. The 7-point Likert self-report scale of political ideology described previously (see *Self-report Political Demographics*) was recoded into a scale of participant political ideology which ranged from -3 to +3. This recoding allowed for an

examination the direction of an individual's ideological leanings. Negative values on this scale indicate that the participant leans conservative, positive values indicate that the participant leans liberal, and moderate participants are given a value of 0. The magnitude of response was also a proxy for the extremity of the participant's political ideology, or how far away from the midpoint of 0 (politically moderate) they considered themselves to be. For example, a value of -3 would indicate a response of *Very Conservative*, and a value of +1 would indicate a response of *Somewhat Liberal.* The measure of political ideology was recoded in this way to provide a foundation for the scales of political ideology in H2 and H3.

For this hypothesis, the critical measure of information search was how many screens of information participants opted to process before moving into each policy issue survey (see *Within a Policy Issue: Text and the Read More Option)*. To that end, the number of screens of text (with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 4) each participant viewed for each policy issue, and the total number of screens they viewed over all their selected policy issues (with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 24, allowing for an investigation of the average number of pages viewed) were determined. A score of 1 on a single policy issue indicates that the participant only read the first (definition) page of text before proceeding to the policy issue survey. Scores of 2, 3, and 4 indicate that participants also read the legislation, pro, and con pages respectively. The number of total pages participants viewed over all policy issues was divided by the total number of policy issues they selected within the study. This resulted in a count of the average number of pages viewed by each participant. During analysis, a coding error in counting the number of screens was discovered in the programming of the survey which affected 12 participants. Data from the affected participants was filtered out during the analysis of this hypothesis, but their data was usable for analysis of the two subsequent hypotheses.

Recoding for Hypothesis 2. To create a measure of ideological extremity for this hypothesis, we computed the absolute values of all participant scores from the recoded political ideology variable described above. A value of 1 on this scale indicated that participants rated themselves as only *Somewhat* ideological, participants with a 2 were ideological, and participants with a 3 rated themselves as *Very* ideological. Political moderates (82 individuals) were excluded from the analysis for this hypothesis, because their political affiliation could not be determined from the single-item political ideology measure used in this study, making it impossible to measure the percentage of ingroup issues they selected.

The information search component of this analysis was comprised of the percentage of ingroup issues selected by individual participants throughout the course of the survey. The six policy issues provided to participants included three liberal issues (Abortion: Pro-Choice, Black Lives Matter, and Green New Deal), and three conservative issues (2nd Amendment Rights, Border Security, and Law Enforcement Protection). To create this variable, data was recoded to provide a measure of the proportion of ingroup issues participants viewed. A measure of the proportion of ingroup issues viewed relative to outgroup issues viewed was calculated by determining the number of selected issues congruent with their reported political ideology (e.g. the number of liberal issues a liberal selected or the number of conservative issues a conservative selected), and dividing that by the total number of policy issues chosen (as participants were required to choose a minimum of four political issues, the minimum possible proportion of ingroup issues viewed was 25%, and the maximum possible proportion was 75%). For example, a liberal participant who selected three liberal issues (Abortion: Pro Choice, Black Lives Matter, and Green New Deal) and one conservative issue (Border Security) would have an ingroup bias of 75%. A liberal participant who selected one liberal issue (Green New Deal) and three

conservative issues (2nd Amendment Rights, Border Security, and Law Enforcement Protection)

would display a 25% selection of ingroup issues.

   Recoding for Hypothesis 3. For this hypothesis, political ideology was only considered as

it relates to whether a participant was conservative, moderate, or liberal, independent of their

ideological extremity. As the self-report measure of political ideology could not account for

variability among moderates (who could be moderate for a number of reasons including, but not

limited to, political apathy, a mix of conservative and liberal policy positions, or a moral stance

against extreme viewpoints), political ideology was considered categorically. To that end, the

political ideology measure was recoded so that indicators of -1 (*Conservative*), 0 (*Moderate*),

and +1 (*Liberal*), now described only the category of an individual's political leanings.

Moderates were included so their issue selection behavior could be compared to liberals and

conservatives.

   The key indicator of participants' information search behavior for this analysis was the

percentage of liberal issues participants selected over the course of the study. To determine the

political diversity of policy issues explored, the total number of liberal issues participants viewed

was divided by the total number of issues they selected. Like with H2, because participants were

required to complete 4 policy issues, the minimum possible proportion for this variable was 25%

liberal issues selected, and the maximum was 75% liberal issues selected. A participant who

selected one liberal issue (Green New Deal) and three conservative issues (2nd Amendment

Rights, Border Security, and Law Enforcement Protection) would display a 25% selection of

liberal issues. A participant who selected a perfectly diverse array of policy issues would get a

50% on this measure. As such, the group with scores which were numerically closest to 50%

tended to gather the most diverse set of information.

Hypothesis 1: When compared to individuals who identify as conservative, individuals who identify as liberal will review more information before making a decision regarding political issues

To determine whether liberals review more information before making a decision regarding political issues relative to conservatives, a linear regression was performed which compared these two key variables, using the combined measure of a participant's political ideology (ranging from -3 to +3; $M = 0.55$, $SD = 1.81$) as the independent variable, and the average number of pages each participant viewed per policy issue as the dependent variable (ranging from 1 to 4; $M = 2.014$, $SD = 1.22$). The political ideology of participants predicted the mean number of pages participants viewed ($b = 0.105$, $se = 0.030$, $t = 3.309$, $p = .001$). As predicted, as the liberal ideology of participants increased, so too did the average number of pages read before proceeding to the policy issue survey (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who identify as strongly liberal and strongly conservative will be more likely to select issues that are relevant to their political ideology than individuals who have weak political affiliations

The average percentage of ingroup issues selected across all participants was diverse, and presented a trend which slightly favored ingroup policy issues. A linear regression was conducted which examined the percentage of ingroup issues (25% - 75%; $M = 0.56$, $SD = 0.14$) as a function of a participant's ideological extremity (1, 2, 3; $M = 1.61$, $SD = 1.00$). Consistent with this hypothesis, as ideological extremity increases, so too does the bias towards selecting ingroup issues, $b = .026$, $se = .009$, $t = 2.908$, $p = .004$ (see Figure 2).

Hypothesis 3: Individuals with moderate political identities will select a more diverse array of policy issues than liberals and conservatives

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to investigate the impact of political ideology (Conservative (-1), Moderate (0), and Liberal (+1), $M = 0.24$, $SD = 0.88$) on the proportion of liberal policy issues participants selected (25%-75%, $M = 0.55$, $SD = 0.14$). Of interest was how the average proportion of liberal issues selected differed across each of the three groups. The proportion of liberal issues selected varied as a function of participant political ideology ($F (2, 492) = 30.51$). Liberal participants selected a greater proportion of liberal issues ($M = 0.59$, $SD = 0.13$) than moderates ($M = 0.54$, $SD = 0.12$). In addition, moderate participants selected a greater proportion of liberal issues than conservatives ($M = 0.48$, $SD = 0.15$). A post hoc Tukey's HSD test confirmed that conservatives, moderates, and liberals were statistically significant from each other ($p < 0.01$).

Surprisingly, though the mean proportion of liberal policy issues selected by moderate participants falls between the mean proportion selected by both liberals and conservatives, conservatives also appeared to select a more diverse array of political issues (see Figure 3). In other words, based upon means alone conservatives displayed a smaller bias towards ingroup issues than liberals. This suggests that H3 was only partially supported by this data, however, these results could be influenced by the number of total issues participants selected, or a moderate group which leaned liberal, neither of which was examined here in detail.

General Discussion

The present research examined the relationship between political ideology (category of political ideology and degree of ideological extremity) and political information search. Previous literature has indicated that the political ideology (liberal/conservative) of an individual influences their cognitive approach when presented with political information and political media (Lau et al., 2017). Liberals and conservatives have previously displayed a preference for

consuming ingroup political media which exists across all media types (Stroud, 2008; Garz et al., 2019). While prior research has consistently found a preference towards ingroup political issues for both liberals and conservatives, their consumption of outgroup political issues is an area of debate. Some literature suggests that liberals and conservatives have displayed a preference to both consume ingroup media and avoid outgroup media (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Jost & Krochik, 2014), while other studies suggest that these individuals do not actively avoid outgroup media (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012). These studies all investigated the type (liberal or conservative) of political media selected by liberals and conservatives, but did not investigate how much information participants sought. It is also the case that these studies have rarely considered ideological extremity, meaning few studies primarily investigate individuals of more moderate political ideologies.

It is also well established that there are a number of cognitive differences between liberals and conservatives, with evidence that liberals are more open to new experience and ideas than conservatives (Van Heil et al., 2000; Shook & Fazio, 2009; Jost et al., 2009; Jost & Krochik, 2014) and more willing to expose themselves to a wider array of novel stimuli relative to conservatives (Shook & Fazio, 2009). These findings suggest that there may be a broad tendency among liberals to engage in deeper levels of political information search, and pursue a larger amount of information than their conservative counterparts. However, these studies do not directly investigate the depth of political information pursued, nor do they compare the information search behavior of liberals and conservatives with that of moderates. Investigating the depth of information liberals and conservatives review while engaging in political information search is a necessary field of study as that data can help characterize the information search preferences of each group and provide actionable data which political communicators can

use to better communicate with liberals and conservatives. For example, if a group which a

political communicator is targeting tends to engage in shallow information search and read less

than their political counterparts, said political communicator can state their key points

immediately and concisely in order to deliver the most effective message. The present study

went beyond these investigations to examine the impact of political ideology and ideological

extremity on both the diversity of issues selected and depth of information examined.

Consistent with H1, the results suggest that liberals pursue more information regarding a

political issue before answering questions related to that issue than their conservative

counterparts. This finding is consistent with that of both Deppe and colleagues (2015)—who

found that liberals engage in more reflective thinking, while conservatives engage in intuitive

thinking when performing cognitive tasks—and the suggestion that liberals are more open to

new information and experiences than conservatives (Van Heil et al., 2000; Shook & Fazio,

2009; Jost et al., 2009; Jost & Krochik, 2014). These studies suggest that conservatives may

make quick and/or intuitive decisions, while liberals are more likely to review more information

before approaching a decision.

Consistent with H2, as the ideological extremity of participants increased, so too did their

tendency to select ingroup issues during information search. The finding that ingroup bias and

ideological extremity are positively correlated is consistent with the Strickland et al. (2011)

finding that individuals with the strongest attitudes regarding political issues are the most

motivated to maintain their beliefs. Similarly, it has been reported that as individuals become

more ideologically extreme, they become more likely to select articles attributed to ingroup

issues (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). These results lend credence to the concept that an individual's

degree of ideological extremity is directly tied to their information search behavior as it relates to ingroup and outgroup policy issues.

With regard to H3, moderate participants did select an average proportion of liberal policy issues which fell between that of liberals and conservatives. Preliminary investigation indicates that the group which selected the most diverse array of policy issues was, unexpectedly, conservative participants. It is important to note, however, that interpretation of this trend is difficult given a number of other relevant factors that were not controlled for. For example, the analysis of issues chosen did not include measures of how many pages each participant read on an issue, how long they spent on each screen, or how long it took them to respond to survey questions, each of which could potentially mediate this effect. Differences in extremity between liberals and conservatives within our sample may also have impacted this effect. It could also be the case that the moderate participants in this sample may have been more left leaning, which could also impact interpretation of these results. Of note, however, prior research has found that when individuals are faced with the possible rising power of an opposing political camp (as conservative participants were at the time this survey was administered), they ignore their own confirmation bias and instead become motivated to pursue outgroup information in order to predict any upcoming political stances which the opponent party may take (Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012). This preference for broad political information superseding a bias for ingroup policy issues may explain why conservative participants displayed a weaker ingroup bias than liberal participants in this study.

Though the finding that conservatives selected the most diverse array of policy issues (48%, compared to 54% for moderates and 59% for liberals) are preliminary, they would appear to be at odds with the results of Frimer and colleagues (2017) who demonstrated that partisan

individuals are motivated to avoid outgroup content. Rather, the present results align with the

predictions of political information bias as suggested by Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman

(2012) who proposed that times of imminent political change, such as Presidential Elections,

motivate the group which is projected to lose (in this case, conservatives) to engage with more

outgroup information. The 2020 U.S. Presidential Election experienced delays in publishing

results, primarily because of the historic amount of early votes cast (over 100 million), which in

many states could not be counted in completion until after election day (Douglas, 2020). The

Associated Press did not call the election in favor of Joe Biden until November 7, four days after

election day. Donald Trump, the Republican sitting President at the time of this election, had

repeatedly attacked the integrity of mail in voting (which tends to lean liberal) prior to the

election, in which many Americans were forced to use the vote by mail systems to ensure their

safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering this context, it is clear that the national

political context surrounding this election was one of imminent political change. Though

conservative participants were still found to engage in biased policy issue selection which

favored their ingroup, it is possible that their greater likelihood of sampling liberal issues was

driven by proximity to this closely contested election. Knobloch-Westerwick and Kleinman

(2012) also reported that moderate participants appeared to display a liberal bias in their

information search behavior, as was also observed in the present study. It would be useful to

replicate this study at a later point in the future which is more removed from an important

election to determine whether the results generalize or whether the present results were

influenced by the time period in which the data was collected.

Limitations and Future Directions

Further research is required to both clarify and expand upon the findings of the present study, some of which can be addressed via future analysis of the additional measures collected. Though the primary interest in this study was political ideology as self-reported by participants, it is important to note that self-reported political ideology is not always consistent with political ideology as measured by scales such as the Wilson-Patterson and Society Works Best. Self-reported political ideology measures how an individual categorizes themselves within the political spectrum, whereas the Wilson-Patterson and Society Works Best evaluate the political affiliations of individuals indirectly by measuring participants' policy attitudes. For the purposes of this study, the group an individual identified themselves with was the more important of the two measures, however, this measure did not allow us to evaluate whether moderate participants leaned liberal or conservative. Future analyses could address these same questions while employing a combination of the Wilson-Patterson Inventory and Society Works Best to get a more complete view of individual political ideology. Alternatively, moderates could be asked via self-report measure whether they lean liberal or conservative. Moreover, while it was the case that liberal participants tended to review more information screens than moderates or conservatives, it is unclear how long they spent on each screen and whether the information was actually processed to a deep degree. Examining not only the amount of information processed but also the amount of time spent processing that information could provide important additional insight.

The finding that liberals engage in deeper information search before making a political decision could, among other motivations, indicate that liberals are driven to be better informed, or are more curious than conservatives. Van Hiel et al. (2000) and Jost and Krochik (2014) reported that liberals score higher in measures of open-mindedness than conservatives, which

may correlate with curiosity. Jost and Krochik (2014) further reported that conservatives are more subjectively certain in their attitudes, which may relate to an avoidance of what they may deem to be unnecessary information. However, there is a dearth of information relating to a number of other potentially relevant personality variables (e.g. age, need for cognitive closure). This study did not investigate any mechanisms driving behavior given that it was unclear whether liberals and conservatives would process information differentially, but it will be important in the future to determine the underlying demographic and personality variables that predict information gathering behavior.

Caution should be taken in interpreting the result that conservative participants appeared to select a more diverse array of issues than liberal and moderate participants. Analysis of H3 did not include the total number of policy issues selected by each individual, with more issues chosen changing the maximum number of ingroup/outgroup issues selected (e.g. selecting six issues necessarily means that 50% were conservative and 50% were liberal, but selecting four issues can lead to a range between 25% and 75% of ingroup vs. outgroup issues chosen). It could be the case that there were differences in terms of how many issues are most likely to be selected between conservatives, moderates, and liberals, and a difference in this would moderate the interpretation of the present findings. It could also be the case that certain issues were attractive to liberals or conservatives in an asymmetric manner. Though the topics selected for the present study were intended to be highly relevant to current times, there was no independent measure of whether the topics selected are equivalent with regard to personal/ideological interests. It may be the case that some outgroup topics were more appealing to participants than others. Future investigations could clarify this by presenting participants with a list containing each topic, and having them rate their degree of interest in both reading about this topic, as well as sharing their

own opinions related to this topic. Investigating whether liberals, moderates, or conservatives viewed a larger number of policy issues than their peers may have additional implications for investigations of political ideology as it relates to the proportion of ingroup issues participants select. Subsequent research should investigate whether the amount of political information participants consume in a political search task differs significantly between groups. It is also important to note that this study's sample was not representative of the general U.S. population, and as such there are limitations to generalizing this study's findings to a broader population.

Finally, within the information search task, the pro and con sections were divided into two separate sections. Given that participants might assume that pro arguments are logically followed by con arguments, it could be anticipated that a pro section would be followed by a con section. As such, if a participant chose to read the pro section and skip to the policy issue survey without reading the con section, they might be deliberately choosing not to read the opposing statement. This could provide insight into individual decision making as a function of political ideology. For example, if a liberal participant chose a more traditionally liberal policy issue (such as Abortion: Pro Choice, Black Lives Matter, or Climate Change), reading the pro arguments and not the con arguments might indicate that the participant was deliberately avoiding information contrary to their own beliefs. However, if a conservative participant chose that same liberal policy issue and read only the pro arguments and skipped the con arguments, this might indicate that the participant felt no need to pursue information they knew they would already support. A choice to continue and read the con section would also provide valuable information. A liberal participant who has selected a liberal policy issue might read the con argument to better understand how to argue against it, or determine the strength of the con as it relates to their existing beliefs. Similarly, a conservative participant who has selected a liberal

policy issue might read the con argument to feel affirmed in their beliefs. Future research could modify the instructions to include the order of information presented (definition, legislation, pro, con). By explicitly informing participants that both a pro and a con section is available, researchers could confidently observe participant behavior related to pro/con sections on both ingroup and outgroup issues.

Conclusion

This research has important implications for the dissemination of political information by politicians and the media, as the data indicates that political conservatives engage in more shallow information search behavior than political liberals. However, this research also suggests that conservatives expose themselves to a more politically diverse array of policy issues than moderates and liberals do, while still viewing fewer screens of text. This finding has practical application for political communicators, outgroup politicians, and news sources in order to communicate more effectively to a conservative audience. If conservatives collect a lower degree of information than their peers, but are more likely to engage with outgroup media, then if an outgroup communicator wants to make sure that their conservative audience understands the crux of their article or opinion, they would likely be more successful if they front loaded their piece with key information. Rather than using a vague title or adding an introduction which provides background to their chosen issue, authors and political communicators could present their key argument or piece of data right away, in either the title or the opening paragraph of their work. The data further suggests that individuals who are most highly partisan (both liberal and conservative) are least likely to seek out outgroup information. Because of this, attempts to communicate with a political outgroup should focus on the less partisan, more moderate portion of that group. Strongly partisan individuals are likely more vocal and therefore easier to locate,

but according to our data are much less likely to engage with outgroup information than weakly

partisan individuals.

Dedication:

I am incredibly grateful for the experience, advice, and editing of Dr. Haas and Dr. Dodd,

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Figure 1

Linear Regression for Hypothesis 1

Average Number of Pages Viewed with Respect to Political Ideology
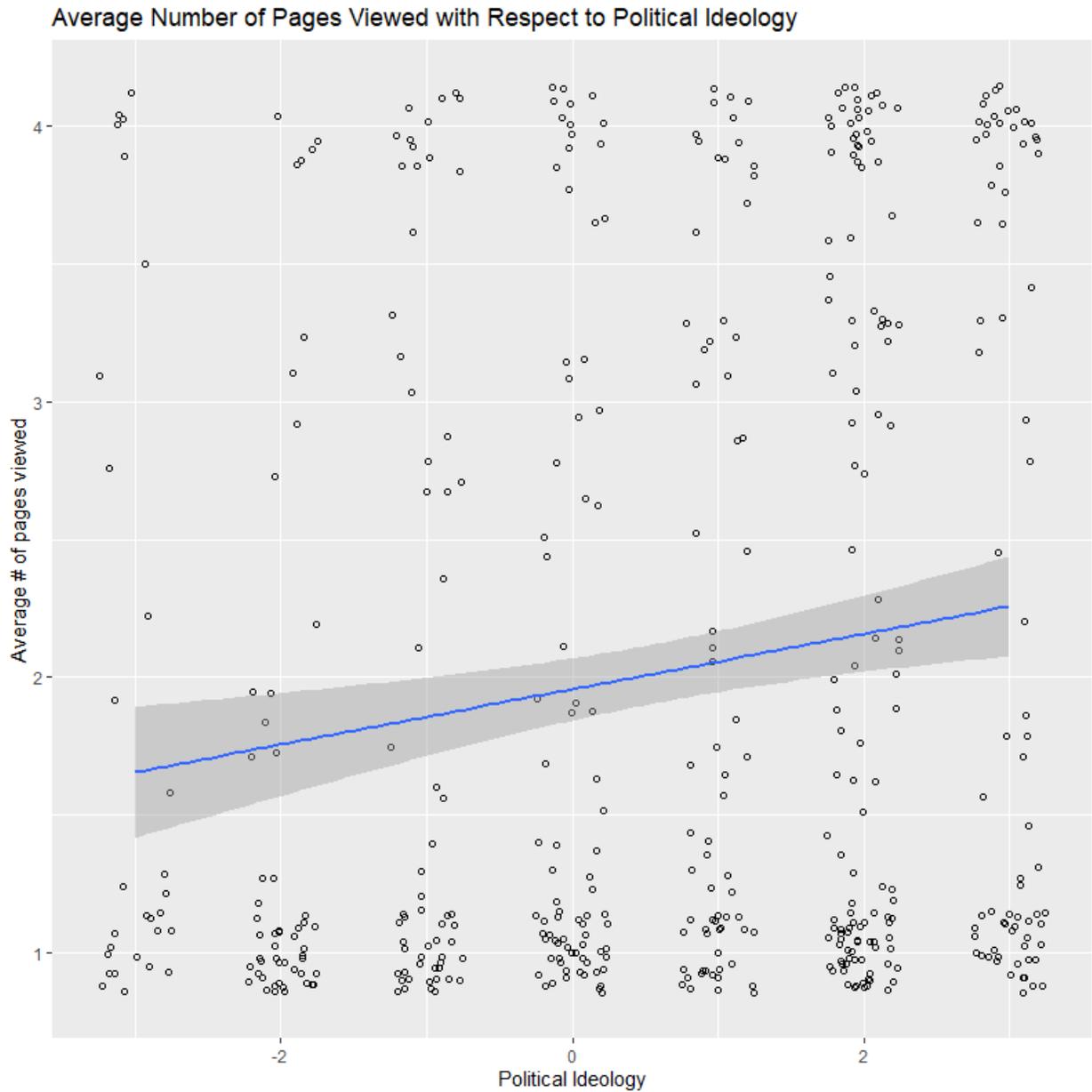
Note: Values on the x-axis of -3 indicate strong conservatism. Values of 0 indicate moderates,

and values of 3 indicate strong liberalism. Data points were jittered to prevent overplotting.

Figure 2

Linear Regression for Hypothesis 2

Percentage of Ingroup Issues Chosen with Respect to Ideological Extremity
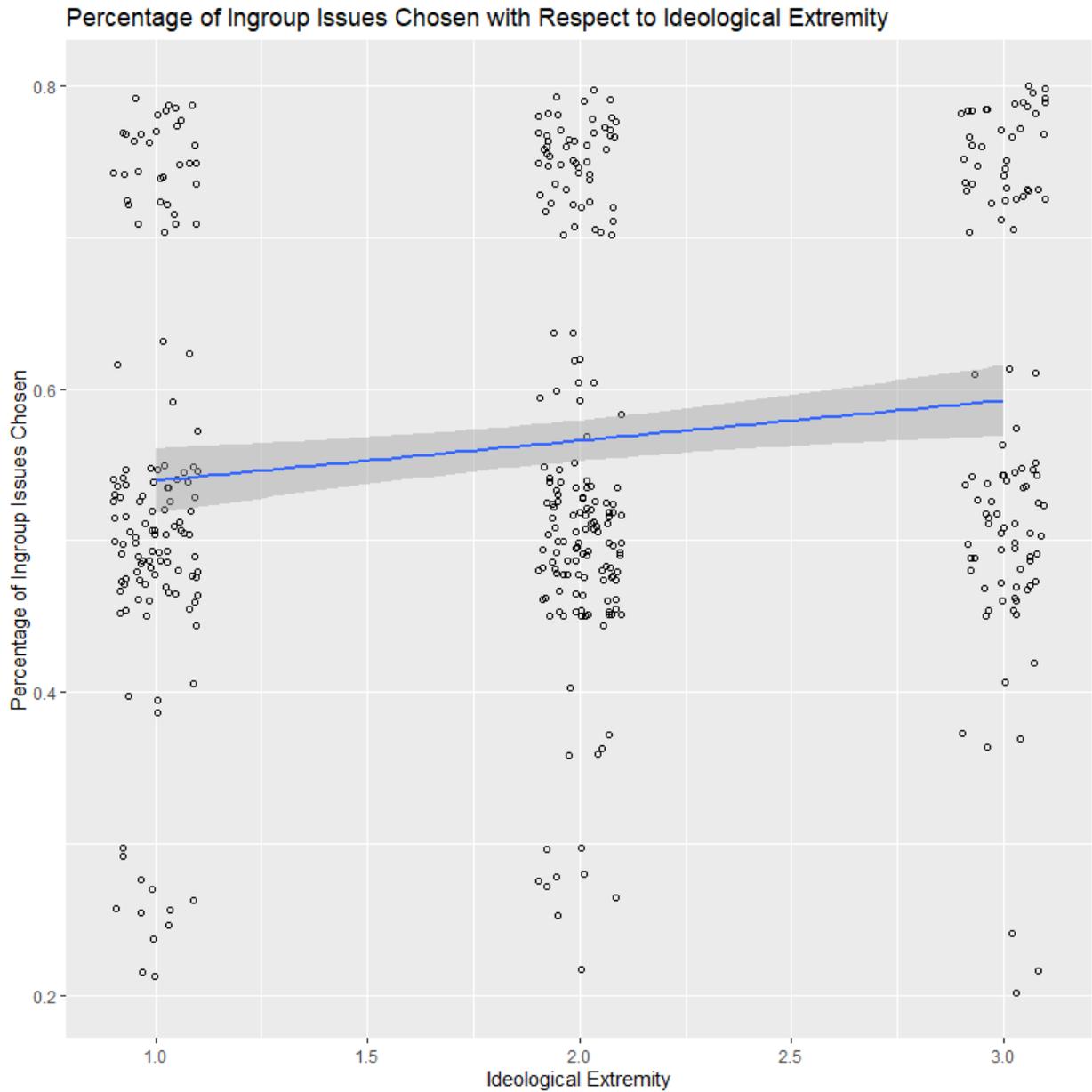
Note: Values on the x-axis of 1 indicate an extremity rating of Slightly partisan. Values of 2 indicate partisan, and values of 3 indicate an extremity rating of Very partisan. Data points were jittered to prevent overplotting.

Figure 3

One-way between subjects ANOVA for Hypothesis 3

Percentage of Liberal Issues Chosen with Respect to Ideological Identity
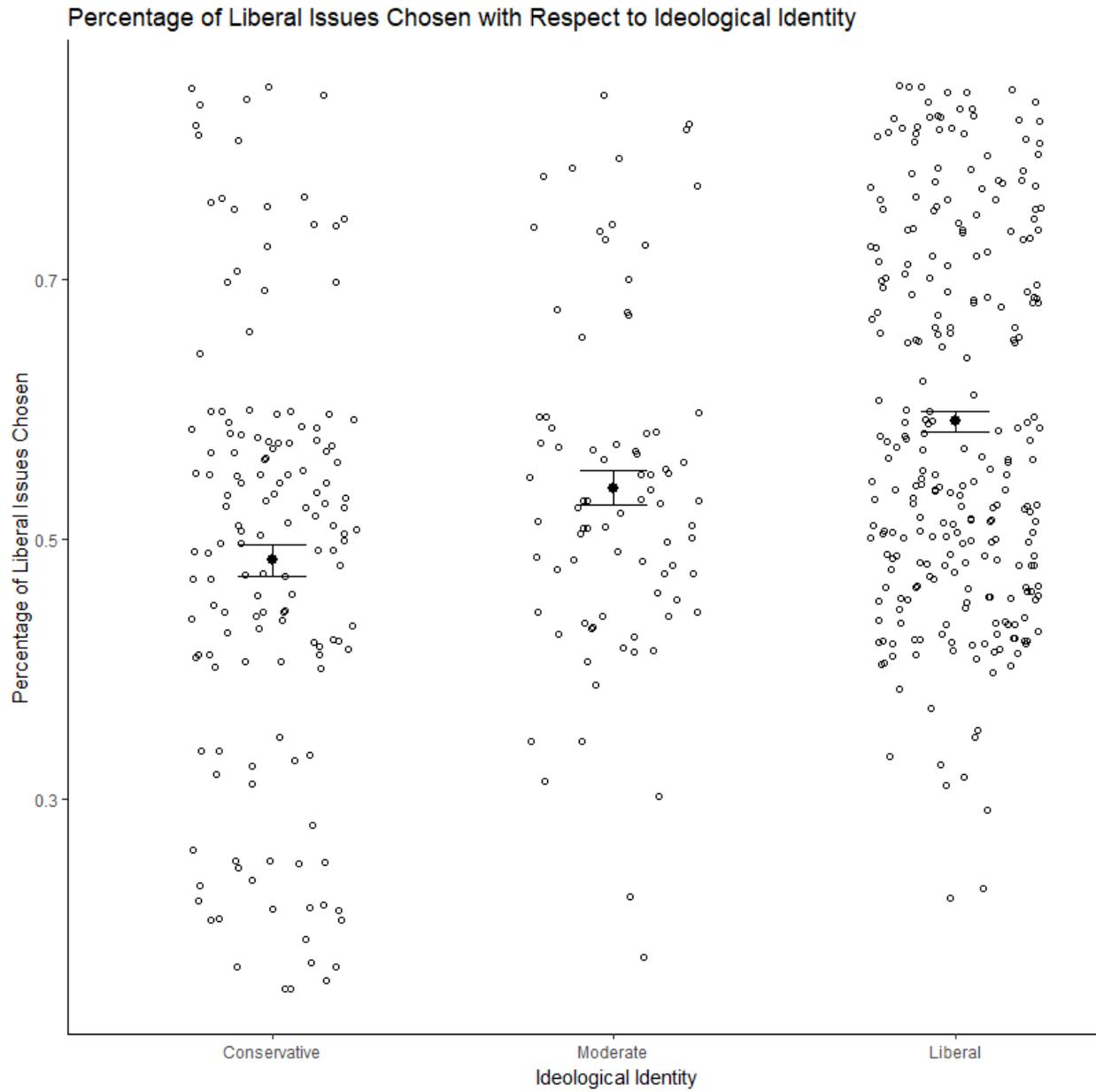
Note: Data points were jittered to prevent overplotting.

Appendix 1

Policy Issue 1

SECTION 1	ABORTION: PRO-CHOICE
DEFINITION	Abortion is a medical procedure which terminates an embryo or fetus within a pregnant person, thus ending their pregnancy. An abortion can be performed several ways, including both medication and surgical procedures.
LEGISLATION	In the landmark Roe v. Wade case, the Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. constitution protects a pregnant person's freedom to choose to have an abortion, without excessive restriction by the government. This ruling overturned a Texas statute which banned abortion, and made the procedure legal across the U.S. Each state can choose how they will regulate abortion after a pregnancy reaches the stage of viability. These restrictions apply to all abortions within the state, except when an abortion is medically necessary to preserve the health and life of the pregnant individual.
PRO	Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote in her dissenting opinion in Gonzales v. Carhart (2007) that undue restrictions on abortion

	infringe upon "a woman's autonomy to determine her life's course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature."
	The majority opinion in Roe v. Wade states that "the word 'person,' as used in the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution, does not include the unborn."
CON	Upon fertilization, a human individual is created with a unique genetic identity that remains unchanged throughout their life. This individual has a fundamental right to life, which must be protected.
	Unborn babies are considered human beings by the US government. The federal Unborn Victims of Violence Act, which was enacted "to protect unborn children from assault and murder," states that under federal law, anybody intentionally killing or attempting to kill an unborn child should "be punished… for intentionally killing or attempting to kill a human being."
LIBERAL STATEMENT	All people should have complete control over their body, including choosing not to give birth.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	If someone does not want to give birth for any reason, they should be able to abort their pregnancy.

CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	From the moment of conception, a fetus is human and deserves to live.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	Abortion is murder.

Policy Issue 2

SECTION 2	2ND AMENDMENT RIGHTS
DEFINITION	The 2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, often referred to as the "Right to Bear Arms" reads: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."
LEGISLATION	The 2008 Supreme Court case District of Columbia v. Heller established that U.S. citizens have an individual right to possess firearms for lawful purposes such as self defense, thus striking down the handgun ban Washington D.C. had in place at the time. The court noted that this right to possess firearms did not extend to the sawed-off shotgun or similar "dangerous and unusual" weaponry which could not be used for legal purposes. This ruling upheld the right of states to place restrictions on firearm possession by the mentally ill and felons.

PRO	Gun ownership is an American tradition older than the country itself and is protected by the Second Amendment. More gun control laws would infringe upon the right to bear arms. Justice Antonin Scalia, in the 2008 District of Columbia v. Heller US Supreme Court majority opinion syllabus stated, "The Second Amendment protects an individual right to possess a firearm unconnected with service in a militia, and to use that arm for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defense within the home."
CON	A study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that firearms were the second leading cause of death for children, responsible for 15% of child deaths compared to 20% in motor vehicle crashes. In the 1939 case, U.S. v. Miller, the Supreme Court stated that "The individual's right to bear arms applies only to the preservation or efficiency of a well-regulated militia. Except for lawful police and military purposes, the possession of weapons by individuals is not constitutionally protected."
LIBERAL STATEMENT	Private citizens should not be allowed to own guns.

LIBERAL STATEMENT	The right to bear arms encourages gun related murders and mass shootings.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	All people should have the right to own guns.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	The right to bear arms is crucial for personal self-defense.

Policy Issue 3

SECTION 3	BLACK LIVES MATTER
DEFINITION	The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is dedicated to ending white supremacy and building local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. The movement started in 2013 after the man who fatally shot Trayvon Martin was acquitted. This is a decentralized social movement characterized by protests and street demonstrations against acts such as police brutality and acts of violence motivated by race.
LEGISLATION	The Breathe Act is proposed legislation that seeks to divert federal resources away from policing and jail systems, and towards social programs which would focus on building up communities and address community safety without focusing on incarceration.

	The Confederate battle symbol is often associated with white supremacy and other racist sentiments. The state of Mississippi recently voted to redesign their state flag (which prominently featured the Confederate battle symbol) in response to the growing nationwide support for protests against racial injustice, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. The state will vote on a new flag design in November.
PRO	Systemic racism persists in our schools, offices, court system, police departments, and elsewhere. The Black Lives Matter movement's focus on Black Lives does not undermine the worthiness of any other minority's fight against racism or of any other social justice issue; it merely indicates that this is the issue that they are standing up for right now. Well-designed studies show that discrimination against various signifiers of "blackness" persist in our labor markets. That's one reason Black Americans are disproportionately concentrated in lower-skilled, lower-paid service and manufacturing jobs that require their physical presence, and where many of them were exposed to the coronavirus, while the whiter office workforce safely telecommuted this year.
CON	Black Americans are not the only minority group to suffer discrimination. Black lives don't matter more than Hispanic Lives or

	White lives. All lives are important. The slogan "Black Lives Matter" discriminates against other races.
	America is not systemically racist, because a nation of white racists wouldn't elect and re-elect a black man as president. The concept of systemic racism divides the country and easily leads to violence directed against the system.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	The police should be defunded.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	America is systemically racist.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	All lives matter.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	Black Lives Matter protestors are just violent rioters and looters.

Policy Issue 4

SECTION 4	LAW ENFORCEMENT PROTECTION

DEFINITION	Law enforcement officers, including police officers, have certain personal protections put in place by the U.S. government which help protect them while they are carrying out their duties.
LEGISLATION	Explicitly established by the Supreme Court's Harlow v. Fitzgerald decision in 1982, Qualified Immunity is a doctrine that shields government officials, such as law enforcement officers, from being held personally liable for constitutional violations (such as the right to be free from excessive police force) for money damages under federal law as long as the officials didn't violate rights which a reasonable person should have known.
PRO	Legal protections for officers allows them to carry out law enforcement more effectively, without the threat of lawsuits. In defense of qualified immunity, the Supreme Court wrote that "there is the danger that fear of being sued will dampen the ardor of all but the most resolute, or the most irresponsible public officials, in the unflinching discharge of their duties." Along similar lines, in a more recent opinion, the Supreme Court explained: "The doctrine of qualified immunity gives government officials breathing room to make reasonable but mistaken judgments about open legal questions."

CON	Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor criticized qualified immunity, writing that the policy "sends an alarming signal to law enforcement officers and the public. It tells officers that they can shoot first and think later, and it tells the public that palpably unreasonable conduct will go unpunished."
	Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas argued that the court's qualified immunity jurisprudence "represents precisely the sort of free-wheeling policy choices" that are not within the providence of courts' authority.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	Police officers should be held personally accountable for violating the constitution.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	The fear of unjustified lawsuits against police officers is overblown.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	Removing qualified immunity (protections for police officers) would be problematic.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	Police should be protected from any mistakes they make in the line of duty.

Policy Issue 5

| SECTION 5 | BORDER SECURITY |

DEFINITION	The US. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency is a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It seeks to prevent dangerous individuals and materials from crossing the border into the United States, while facilitating lawful international travel and trade. It is one of the world's largest law enforcement organizations.
LEGISLATION	The 2017 Border Security of America Act provided for increases in Border patrol personnel, infrastructure improvements, and a rapid passenger vehicle inspection system at multiple land ports along the Mexican border, among other items. It also prohibits federal agencies from restricting Customs and Border Protection (CBP) activities on federal land within 100 miles of the southern border.
PRO	A Nation without borders is not a nation. Borders should be enforced to keep illegal aliens and terrorists from crossing into America. The economic impact of illegal immigration in the U.S. is costly and impacts the financial security of the county's legal residents. Despite paying unavoidable taxes such as sales tax, illegal immigrants generally do not pay income taxes. Meanwhile, government services often cost more per person for illegal immigrants than for American citizens. Education, for example, often costs more per student for illegal

	immigrants because of the need for remedial and ESL classes. Illegal immigrants also have an impact on our criminal justice system.
CON	Many undocumented immigrants pay taxes, use government services and collect benefits. Most importantly, undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy. Labor economists agree that there are net gains to having a larger labor supply. Granting legal status to all undocumented immigrants in the United States as part of a comprehensive immigration reform and allowing them to work legally would increase their state and local tax contributions by an estimated $2.1 billion a year.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	Deporting illegal immigrants would be inhumane.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	Undocumented immigrants should be granted easy paths to citizenship.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	Illegal immigrants are a threat to America's security and economy.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	We should have a large wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Policy Issue 6

SECTION 6	GREEN NEW DEAL
DEFINITION	With regard to climate change, scientists have found that average surface temperatures on earth have risen more than 2°F over the past 100 years. During this time period, atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO2) and methane (CH4) have notably increased.
LEGISLATION	The Green New Deal is a proposed congressional resolution which seeks to combat climate change and economic inequality by having the United States move away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while guaranteeing the creation of new high-paying jobs within the clean energy industry.
PRO	Rising levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases are a direct result of human activities such as burning fossil fuel. These increases in global temperature are causing significant and increasingly severe climate changes including global warming, loss of sea ice, sea level rise, stronger storms, and more droughts. Immediate international action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is necessary to prevent dire climate changes. Switching over to clean

	energy would also produce many jobs within clean energy industries, benefitting our economy.
CON	Human-generated greenhouse gas emissions are too small to substantially change the earth's climate. Earth is able to absorb man-made carbon emissions. Earth's climate has always warmed and cooled, and the 20th century rise in global temperature is within the bounds of natural temperature fluctuations over the past 3,000 years. Warming over the 20th century resulted primarily from natural processes such as fluctuations in the sun's heat and ocean currents. The theory of human-caused global climate change is based on questionable measurements, faulty climate models, and misleading science.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	Climate change is caused by human behavior.
LIBERAL STATEMENT	America should immediately switch to sources of green and renewable energy.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	The climate change over the past 100 years is a natural part of Earth's cycle.
CONSERVATIVE STATEMENT	America should continue to support the coal and fossil fuel industries.

Appendix 2

1. What is your political orientation?

☐ Very Liberal (1)

☐ Liberal (2)

☐ Somewhat Liberal (3)

☐ Moderate (4)

☐ Somewhat Conservative (5)

☐ Conservative (6)

☐ Very Conservative (7)

☐ Other (8)

2. How interested are you in politics?

☐ Not at all interested 1 (1)

☐ 2 (2)

☐ 3 (3)

☐ Neither interested nor uninterested 4 (4)

☐ 5 (5)

☐ 6 (6)

☐ Very interested 7 (7)

3. Are you currently registered to vote?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

☐ I'm not sure (3)

☐ I'm not eligible to vote in U.S. elections (4)

4. What party are you currently registered to vote with? (Display if Q8 = 1)

☐ Democratic Party (1)

☐ Republican Party (2)

☐ I'm registered as an Independent (3)

☐ Other (4)

5. If you were to register to vote, what party would you register to vote with?

   (Display if Q8 ≠ 1)

☐ Democratic Party (1)

☐ Republican Party (2)

☐ I would register as an Independent (3)

☐ Other (4)

6. Which of these political descriptors do you most closely identify with?

☐ Strong Republican (1)

☐ Republican (2)

☐ Somewhat Republican (3)

☐ Moderate (4)

☐ Somewhat Democratic (5)

☐ Democratic (6)

☐ Strong Democrat (7)

☐ Other (8)

7. Rate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statement: My political affiliation (Democrat, Republican, etc.) is an important part of my identity.

☐ Strongly Disagree (1)

☐ Disagree (2)

☐ Somewhat Disagree (3)

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)

☐ Somewhat Agree (5)

☐ Agree (6)

☐ Strongly Agree (7)

8. Where do you usually get your News?

☐ Local Newspaper (1)

☐ TV (2)

☐ Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, Reddit) (3)

☐ Friends and Family (4)

☐ Other (5) _____

9. Which Station do you most turn to for political news?

☐ FOX News (1)

☐ CNN (2)

☐ NPR (3)

☐ Other (4) _____

Appendix 3

WILSON PATTERSON INVENTORY (Wilson & Patterson, 1968)

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with regard to each policy issue listed below:

School Prayer	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Pacifism	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Socialism	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Pornography	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Illegal Immigration	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Women's Equality	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Death Penalty	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Patriot Act	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Premarital Sex	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Gay Marriage	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Abortion Rights	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Evolution	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Patriotism	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Welfare Spending	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Globalization	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Pollution Control	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Small Government	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
School Standards	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Foreign Aid	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Free Trade	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)

Obedience	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Compromise	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Black Lives Matter	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Gun Control	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Defund Police	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Qualified Immunity	(+)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)
Medicare for All	(−)	(Strongly Oppose) 1	2	3	4	5 (Strongly Support)

Note:

Items listed with a (+) next to them indicate that a score of "5 (Strongly Support)" is consistent with values associated with the political right.

Items listed with a (−) next to them indicate that a score of "5 (Strongly Support)" is consistent with values associated with the political left.

Appendix 4

SOCIETY WORKS BEST INSTRUMENT (Smith et al., 2011)

Choose the phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. Society works best when…

□ People realize the world is dangerous   (+)

□ People assume all those in far away places are kindly   (–)

2. Society works best when…

□ Our leaders are obeyed   (+)

□ Our leaders are questioned   (–)

3. Society works best when…

□ People are rewarded according to merit   (+)

□ People are rewarded according to need   (–)

4. Society works best when…

□ We take care of our own people first   (+)

□ We realize that people everywhere deserve our help   (–)

5. Society works best when…

□ Our leaders compromise with their opponents in order to get things done   (–)

□ Our leaders adhere to their principles no matter what   (+)

6. Society works best when…

□ People live according to traditional values   (+)

□ People adjust their values to fit changing circumstances   (–)

7. Society works best when…

□ Our leaders call the shots   (+)

□ Our leaders are forced to listen to others   (–)

8. Society works best when…

□ People take primary responsibility for their welfare   (+)

□ People join together to help others   (–)

9. Society works best when…

□ People recognize the unavoidable flaws of human nature   (+)

□ People recognize that humans can be changed in positive ways   (–)

10. Society works best when…

□ People are proud they belong to the best society there is   (+)

□ People realize that no society is better than any other   (–)

11. Society works best when…

□ Every member contributes   (+)

□ More fortunate members sacrifice to help others   (–)

12. Society works best when…

□ Behavioral expectations are based on an external code   (+)

□ Behavioral expectations are allowed to evolve over the decades   (–)

13. Society works best when…

□ Those who break the rules are punished   (+)

□ Those who break the rules are forgiven   (–)

Note:

Items listed with a (+) next to them indicate that selection of this option is consistent with values associated with the political right.

Items listed with a (–) next to them indicate that selection of this option is consistent with values associated with the political left.

Appendix 5

Demographics

    1.   How old are you (in years)?

_____

    2.   To which gender identity do you most identify?

☐ Male (1)

☐ Female (2)

☐ Nonbinary (3)

☐ Prefer not to Answer (4)

☐ Not listed (5) _____

    3.   To which sexual orientation do you most identify?

☐ Heterosexual (straight) (1)

☐ Bisexual (2)

☐ Homosexual (gay/lesbian) (3)

☐ Asexual (4)

☐ Prefer not to Answer (5)

☐ Other (6) _____

    4.   What is your ethnicity? (If you identify with multiple categories, please select all that apply)

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (1)

☐ Asian or Asian American (2)

☐ Black or African American (3)

☐ Latinx/Hispanic/Chicanx/Puerto Rican (4)

☐ Middle Eastern or North African (5)

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (6)

☐ White or European American (7)

☐ Other Identity (8) _____

5. Is English your first language?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)