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# FINDING COMMON GROUND; INDIVIDUAL TRAIT DIFFERENCES AND THE PERSUASIVE EFFECTS OF MORAL FRAMING

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FINDING COMMON GROUND; INDIVIDUAL TRAIT DIFFERENCES AND THE

PERSUASIVE EFFECTS OF MORAL FRAMING

BY

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# ABSTRACT

Political disagreement, both interpersonally and universally, undermines the prospect of a central ideological meeting point. While there is much research to connect individual traits with political preference, less exists on the ways in which these differences might be alleviated. Particularly, more must be done to scrutinize the specific language we use and the persuasive effects that it carries. This study utilizes moral language preferable by either Conservatives or Liberals in a persuasive experiment designed to persuade Liberals and Conservatives respectively to favor an issue of the opposing political party. A 2x3 experimental design presented respondents with an issue that their party would not typically agree with, using moral language that they would. The experiment designed to persuade Conservatives used both loyalty and purity language, while the experiment designed to persuade Liberals used fairness language. Results indicate that differences in political preference were significant, and that fairness language (i.e. justice, equality, opportunity) was most effective in persuading both Republican and Democratic respondents on the issues of making English the official language of the United States, and universal health care. Both purity and loyalty frames were not found to be significant. Implications and future considerations are discussed.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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**CHAPTER 1**

INTRODUCTION

Ideological differences have never been more relevant in American society. Political polarization, both interpersonally and universally, implicates our continuous migration from a central ideological meeting point. Though a wide margin of variables may play a role in the increase of political polarization – modern media, demographics, and environmental factors, to name a few – the focus of this study is to look at individual traits like personality, political preference, and moral values through an interpersonal communicative lens.

A majority of the discussion on this topic revolves around the causes of polarization and interpersonal disagreement. However, less exists on the ways in which these differences and disagreements can be alleviated. Put differently, the relationship between polarization and persuasion is lacking in present research. The overarching goal of this thesis is to determine a way to find common ground through interpersonal communication. More specifically, this study aims to determine the persuasive effects of targeted language on the attitudes we hold and its subsequent implication on the discipline of communication and on society as a whole. The intersection of the communication, psychology, and political science disciplines informs this interdisciplinary research paper to provide a framework towards imploring more centralized political conversations with one another.

My interest in this area is rooted in the ideological political divide between people who otherwise might have found common ground. By nature of attribution error, we often overlook that even our worst enemies believe themselves to be doing the right thing. Communication and a prior understanding of one's beliefs and traits seem to be a concrete and effective way to find common ground on any given ideological issue. By framing a message to fit within ones existing attitudes, persuasion could be more likely to occur, but further research must be conducted to concretely confirm this notion. For example, someone who has historically exhibited religious prejudice may not react positively to a message that vehemently denounces their stance. However, framed differently, that same individual may be more receptive to that message. And while political polarization is more pervasive now than ever before, there is also global access to public information like never before. The ubiquity of social media makes it all too easy to acquire access to someone's belief systems by way of public social profiles.

An underlying goal of this research project is prejudice reduction. Because political attitudes are so frequently linked with social prejudices, it seemed a natural fit to draw a connection between the two ideologies. Although this study will focus on finding common ground on a variety of different issues and political stances, the intention of this thesis is to utilize the research design and existing body of knowledge to understand the ways in which common ground can be found in instances where ones attitudes may lead to prejudicial harm.

This study does not purport itself to 'turn Conservatives liberal' or vice versa, as many have tried to do. It also does not intend to compromise the autonomy of

individuals' political decision-making process, nor use a tactic of manipulation for political gain. The objective is to unveil the ways in which people can interpersonally reason with and understand each other, and its implication on both our interpersonal relationships and society as a whole. I will first conduct a review of the literature on the intersection of attitude change via persuasion, personality theory, and moral foundations, and analyze their relationship with political ideology. Then, upon drawing a connection between personality and political preference through the mediating role of moral values, I will examine the effects of reframing a message using moral values on political persuasion and discuss its greater implication on the field of communication as a whole.

CHAPTER 2


REVIEW OF LITERATURE


*Communication and Persuasion*

Persuasion is the intentional attempt to alter the attitude(s) of another

individual via any method of communication (Perloff, 2010). Persuasion can be

achieved through a plethora of tactics and influenced by numerous factors. For

example, the messenger and relevance of argument can play a role in persuasion, as

well as environment and demographics. According to research on attitude and attitude

change, attitudes have three branches: a cognitive component (involving human

thought), an affective component (regarding human emotion), and a behavioral

component (referring to dispositional factors) (Triandis, 1971). In order for attitude

change to occur, one of these components must be altered.

What we know about attitude is that it is learned and influences our thoughts

and actions (Perloff, 2010, p. 43). We also know that "attitudes – particularly political

ones – are characterized by emotional reactions, sweeping sentiments, and powerful

prejudices" (Perloff, 2010, p. 52).

Within the discipline of communication, social judgment theory, the theory of

reasoned action, theory of planned behavior, and elaboration likelihood model among

many others are considered core theories of persuasion (Perloff, 2010). Social

judgment theory in particular plays a strong role in the understanding of attitude shift

with regard to this study.

*Social Judgment Theory*

The theory of social judgment was first developed by Carolyn Sherif, Muzafer Sherif, and Carl Hovland in 1965 (Perloff, 2010). The theory is inherently an attitude-based persuasion theory and suggests that message receivers do not analyze a message purely on its content, but rather compare it first to their existing beliefs and make a judgment based on that understanding (Perloff, 2010). Further, the original researchers postulate that real persuasion occurs when a message falls into our latitude of non-commitment, or an idea or issue that we don't feel too strongly one way or another (Perloff, 2010). If an individual holds a strong opinion on an issue either too positively or too negatively, the issue falls into the latitude of rejection and persuasion typically will not occur (Perloff, 2010). However, the general assumption is that humans don't feel passionately about all too many issues, and so persuasion via this route is likely.

Since its inception, a number of studies on social judgment theory have been introduced, and they frequently focus on social issues. A 1972 study on attitude towards birth control found individuals with wide latitudes of acceptance on that topic exhibited opinion change through a persuasive communication on that subject (Eagly, Telaak, & Lanzetta, 1972). In addition, those who showed medium or narrow latitudes of acceptance did not change their opinion or perspective (Eagly, Telaak, & Lanzetta, 1972). Another study presented 80 members of a pro-life organization with a persuasive message that fell outside of their existing attitude, but within their latitude of noncommitment (Sarup, Suchner, & Gaylord, 1991). Results were staggering, and overwhelmingly support the idea that social judgments correlate with attitude change (Sarup, Suchner, & Gaylord, 1991).

*Persuasibility*

A surplus of variables can be at play when considering persuasibility. This includes – but is not limited to – sex differences, environmental factors, developmental components, and definitive predispositions, in addition to factors such as argument strength, relationship with the persuader, and emotional elements (Janis, 1959).

Though a study could look at any number of these factors in relation with persuasion, there is significant and consistent research in the realm of dispositional factors (sometimes called persuasibility factors, or predispositions) (Janis, 1959). Personality traits – or variables of individual difference – are key dispositional components (Pervin & John, 1999, p. 140).

*The Role of Personality*

Persuasive communications relating to personality are comprised of a combination of existing attitudes, perceptions, and personal preferences more so than an isolated act of persuasion (Janis, 1959). Though a number of varying personality theories exist, the subject matter of this research calls for a theory that permits characterization of individual traits in order to make generalizations about the communicatee. Because traits influence behavior, (Mondak, 2010, p. 7), it seems only intuitive to further investigate how and why personality affects persuasion. Therefore, I will first narrow in on the "big five" personality traits, or the five-factor model.

The big five include extraversion (outgoing/reserved), agreeableness (compassionate/suspicious), conscientiousness (organized/spontaneous), neuroticism (stressfulness/confidence), and openness (flexibility/rigidity) (Hogan, Johnson, &

Briggs, 1997). According to the five-factor model, adults can be characterized into any combination of these five traits that influence thoughts, feelings, and actions (Pervin & John, 1999, p. 145). This particular personality theory suggests that humans exhibit a distinctive blend of these five traits to make up who we are. The big five are thought to be consistent from childhood through adulthood and determine the ways we interact with one another and influence how we form attitudes and opinions (Hogan, Johnson, & Briggs, 1997). Attitude formation is a key variable in this research subject, and therefore warrants a closer look at the role that personality disposition plays in political preference. With this in mind, personality will be a core focus of this paper to provide a framework for analyzing our inherent traits and decision-making processes.

*Personality and Political Orientation*

Social scientists have long sought to find connections between personality and political preference (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008). For the purpose of this study, political preference will refer to the two core political parties of present-day America, including liberal or democratic ideologies, and conservative or republican ideologies. A number of studies have tested various hypotheses derived from personality theory to determine whether patterns exist across the American political spectrum. The most consistent finding across personality and political research is that Liberals tend to be connected with openness to experience, where Conservatives are frequently linked with conscientiousness (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). Put differently, Liberals "are generally more openminded in their pursuit of creativity, novelty, and diversity, whereas Conservatives' lives are more orderly, conventional, and neat" (Carney et al., 2008). Other studies also link agreeableness with liberalism,

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and connect politeness with conservatism (Hirsh, Deyoung, Xiaowen, & Peterson, 2010).

Additional research also points to the notion that there may be differences in social and economic attitudes across political preferences (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, & Ha, 2010). For example, agreeableness is found to be associated with both economic liberalism and social conservatism, implying that ideological attitudes within political stances can vary depending on the issue (Gerber et al., 2010). Generally, results are only replicable in the environment from which they derive, but there is some research to suggest that similar implications can be drawn from studies conducted in different countries and cultures. For example, one Italian study found that Moderate voters who leaned towards the right exhibited traits of conscientiousness, while Moderates who leaned towards the political left displayed agreeableness and openness, consistent with American studies (Capara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1999).

Nevertheless, a definitive correlation between personality and political orientation has been historically more difficult to prove. In one such study, the presence of political ideology is found to exist beyond the realm of traceable personality types (Feldman & Huddy, 2014). When looking at neuroticism, Huddy and Feldman found that, although conscientiousness and a lack of openness can be connected with conservatism, neuroticism cannot (Feldman & Huddy, 2014). Some researchers also report that, with the exception of openness, political orientation cannot be determined by personality, directly (Alford, Funk & Hibbing, 2005). Though substantial evidence does indicate a correlation between personality and

political preference, I was unable to find research on the role of persuasion in this equation. In other words, there is not much research to suggest that prior knowledge of one's personality traits can better inform our conversations – political or otherwise – to reach an ideological meeting point. The traits are simply too broad, and a more direct correlation needs to be established in order to discuss parallels between personality and political preference. However, others have found that personality and political opinion are directly connected through the mediating role of moral values. It is within this area that a connection can be traced, and a politically persuasive research design begins to emerge.

This connection between personality, moral values, and political preferences is best illustrated using the personality system model. The personality system model (PSM) provides a strong framework for this relationship between political orientation and personality theory. In essence, it attempts to institute a relationship between behavior and personality through character (Lewis and Bates, 2011). The PSM measures different "levels" of domain. In this particular case, Level 1 includes our most basic tendencies like personality (Lewis and Bates, 2011). Level 2 measures our characteristic adaptions or our moral values (Lewis and Bates, 2011). Finally, Level 3 measures our behaviors or, in the case of this paper, political behavior (Lewis and Bates, 2011). One particular key study found that introducing the mediating factor of moral values to individuals reveals connections to both personality factors and political orientation (Lewis and Bates, 2011). While a tie between personality and political orientation might be more difficult to trace, the use of the personality system model allows a line to be drawn from disposition to behavior through moral values.

The implication here is critical: if a correlation exists between personality, moral values, and political opinion, then prior knowledge of moral predispositions could help lead to stronger, more amicable political conversations.

Within this area of study is where the intersection of these variables of political orientation, personality, and moral values begin to come together. An example of this is found in the authoritarian trait, which refers to the complete adherence to policy or laws dictated by another person or group (Hogan, Johnson, & Briggs, 1997). One core study from 1970 convinced individuals they were being interviewed on the basis of public opinion but were instead given a statement presented as a 'fact' that directly contradicted their stance on a given issue (Centers, Shomer, & Rodrigues, 1970). Results indicate that those who exhibit higher levels of authoritarianism are most likely to change their opinion after being presented with concrete research (Centers, Shomer, & Rodrigues, 1970). The results of this study indicate a preference for facts under the authoritarian trait. A second study looked at the presence of threat and scare tactics (Lavine et al., 1999). It surveyed young voting American citizens one week before a Presidential election and found that those who exhibited higher levels of authoritarianism were more susceptible to persuasion via threatening messages (Lavine et al., 1999).

Though authoritarianism is a derivative of personality theory, the trait of authority is a moral value. As discussed, this creates a pathway from personality to moral values, and ultimately to political preference. Through this connection of personality and political preference is how the subject of morals comes to be the prevalent focus of this paper. Upon completing a comprehensive review of literature

surrounding personality theory and persuasion, morals were omnipresent. Studies on the nature of sinning (Jonason, Zeigler-Hill, & Okan, 2017), hedonism (Ksendzova, Iyer, Hill, Wojcik, & Howell 2015), and – as outlined above – the political spectrum, tell us that a link between personality and moral foundations is likely. While personality theory maps the pathway to morality, the understanding of moral values creates a more applicable route for reframing a message with the goal of persuasion. And unlike personality traits, which are traditionally static dispositional factors, moral judgements can be influenced by knowledge, and are therefore much more susceptible to change via persuasive interactions (Emler, 2003). This thesis hinges on that statement. If we can familiarize ourselves with preexisting generalities – like moral values – we can better understand how to communicate with an individual, using language that they understand.

*The Role of Political Attitudes*

I have thus far discussed the factors that influence persuasion and the role that dispositional traits play in the process. I've also discussed the lack of evidence to definitively suggest that personality directly relates to political preference, but that political preference can be determined through the mediating role of moral values. One potential explanation for this is that, when it comes to political attitudes, those who value ideology consider social and political issues very differently than those who do not (Perloff, 2010, p. 54). "Unlike many people, who respond to issues primarily on their basis of simple symbolic predispositions, ideologues begin with an ideology, and their attitudes flow from this" (Perloff, 2010, p. 54). In other words, when considering the relationship between attitude change and politics, it's not enough to look at only

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dispositional factors. A discussion on moral values and key theories in attitude change within the discipline of political science is a necessary component to this topic.

For example, the theory of motivated reasoning suggests that people naturally form beliefs based on preexisting perceptions (Herrmann, 2017). Though logic suggests that dissemination of information on a subject would lead to a more common ideological meeting point, the opposite occurs (Herrmann, 2017). In fact, people "rewrite reality around their favored course of action" by applying logic to their own preferences (Herrmann, 2017). Emotions play a strong role in this hypothesis as well. A 2017 study found that positive attachment to one's own home nation directly correlated with how they felt about other nations who were portrayed to either help or harm that country (Hermann, 2017). For example, if someone feels deeply connected with their United States citizenship, and is told that a Middle Eastern country is a threat to national security, that same person will both understand the statement to be a pure fact, and also interpret future information regarding that subject to fit specifically into their personal belief system. In particular, the concept of loyalty plays a large role in this dynamic, as loyalty is a moral value as well.

In a second study that examined climate change and attitude change via the theory of reasoned action, evidence consistent with ones existing political beliefs was viewed as the stronger argument (Palm, Lewis, and Feng, 2017). In relation to climate change, the research team found that ideology and political party were more likely to predict opinion change over time than fact-based information on climate change (Palm, Lewis, and Feng, 2017). The only examples of opinion change in this instance are the statements where participants' opinion aligned with ones own party. More

specifically, this study was directed towards Republicans, given that "79% of liberal Democrats but only 15% of conservative Republicans" believe that the earth is warming as a result of human activity, despite the fact that 97% of scientists agree that climate change exists (Palm, Lewis, and Feng, 2017). The study found that Republicans were only likely to change their opinion to acknowledge climate change when it aligned with their party leaders and peers' mindsets (Palm, Lewis, and Feng, 2017). This phenomenon especially supports the notion that partisan and moral-based language is more persuasive in attitude change than an unbiased presentation of "fact". In order for a political message to be truly persuasive, it should somewhat align with ones existing political attitudes.

Additional research centered around personality and political opinion also arrives at this same conclusion. Following the terror attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001, surveys found that citizens expressed heavy support for increased security and war policies that did not align with Americans' public opinion historically (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). One particular study found that while those who already exhibited authoritarian attitudes maintained their pro-war stance after the attacks, those who did not previously hold pro-authoritarian attitudes became more inclined to support tighter security and more aggressive war policies (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). This further supports the idea that, when the frame of information is congruent with ones own beliefs and party values, individuals are more likely to demonstrate attitude change.

*Moral Foundations Theory*

Congruent with the theories previously listed, moral foundations theory (MFT) encompasses the notion of morals and persuasive framing in a way that sets up a strong framework for the basis of this study. Stemming from moral psychology, moral foundations theory attempts to explain the variance in human moral values and reasoning (Graham et al., 2012). Jesse Graham and Jonathan Haidt spearheaded this area of research that focuses on basic moral ideological differences and how morals relate to political ideology. Where preference-based stances are often situational, morally charged opinions exist because of a deeply held belief (Graham et al., 2012). Researchers in moral psychology had long understood issues of moral difference to center around harm, rights, and justice (Haidt & Graham, 2007). However, in seeking to understand how politics intersect with moral ideology, Graham and Haidt hypothesize that Conservatives relate to morals that Liberals don't even recognize: ingroup, purity, and authority (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Graham and Haidt hypothesize that there are actually five foundations of moralities: "harm/care (minimizing or increasing harm to others), fairness/reciprocity (equality assurance), ingroup/loyalty (importance of the immediate ingroup), authority/respect (respect for hierarchy and status), and purity/sanctity (avoiding impure or disgusting acts)" (Haidt & Graham, 2007). The researchers go on to theorize that while Conservatives rely on all five moral foundations, Liberals only reason with harm/care and fairness/reciprocity (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009).

In response to these results, Graham and Haidt, along with their research team, developed the Moral Foundations Questionnaire as a way to "map the moral domain, account for cultural differences, and discover moral prejudices" (Graham et al., 2011).

Upon testing these results, later studies find that moral foundations predict judgements of key political issues such as abortion, immigration, and same-sex marriage more accurately than demographic generalizations such as age, gender, or even interest in politics (Koleva, Graham, Iyer, Ditto, & Haidt 2012).

This group of studies in particular creates a direct tie between factors like personality with morals and political preference. The research in this area has the biggest implication on polarization as a whole. If we can understand the foundations that motivate different individuals – in this case, morals – we can better understand how to rephrase a message in order for attitude change to occur. It was from these implications that research of the effects of moral framing on political persuasion came about.

Much like the studies aiming to connect personality and political preference, there are also a plethora of studies concretely connecting moral values with political preference. One such study found that both persuasion (cross-cutting opinion) and entrenching (affirming one's opinion) were possible through moral foundations theory (Day, Fiske, Downing & Trail, 2014). Day et al. administered a test of different moral foundational framings to determine whether exposure to moral frames effects political positions. Their two-part study surveyed Liberals on conservative issues through liberal moral frames, and Conservatives on liberal issues using conservative moral frames (Day et al., 2014). Those who were exposed to a stance they already agreed with - through a moral they already relate to - felt more strongly about those opinions afterwards (Day et al., 2014). The researchers defined this as entrenching, and it occurred on both ends of the political spectrum (Day et al., 2014). Conversely, and in

support of the hypothesis behind this paper, their study found that Conservatives were susceptible to the persuasion hypothesis. Conservatives who were shown a stance they didn't agree with – through a moral value that they adhere to – were more likely to be persuaded to cross cut opinion (Day et al., 2014). Interestingly, Liberals who were shown a conservative stance they didn't agree with through a liberal moral frame did not change their attitudes one way or another as did Conservative samples (Day et al., 2014). The comprehensive study carries great implications for crossing the political divide via moral foundations and message reframing as a form of persuasion. Further, much like social judgment theory, this study outlines a way in which persuasion can occur by moving ones attitude from point A to point B using a persuasive message.

Similarly, another study found that when pro-environmental positions were enforced using a common 'ingroup' moral foundation, Conservatives were more likely to agree with environmentally friendly attitudes (Wolsko, 2017). However, the same tests conducted on Liberals to convince them of anti-environmental stances did not manage to persuade them – Liberals still reinforced pro-environmental attitudes (Wolsko, Ariceaga, & Seiden, 2016).

When considering individual motivations and perceptions of moral foundations, participants have been found not to recognize the degree to which they utilize moral principles. For example, a 2016 study found that the disparities between Conservatives and Liberals were much greater than participants indicated, implying that individuals don't recognize their own polarized frames of communication (Rempala, Okdie, & Garvey, 2016). Also intriguing is that, when tested, participants reach for their own strong moral values rather than the values of those whose opinion

they are trying to change (Feinberg and Willer, 2015). This falls in line with another Haidt and Graham study from 2012 that indicates the degree to which Liberals and Conservatives stereotype both themselves and each other is more extreme than actual indicated differences (Graham, Nosek, Haidt & Young, 2012). These three studies suggest to researchers that communicators are not typically aware of these moral differences and are not likely to reach for a different moral frame as a method to find common ground. This finding provides additional support to this paper's goal of understanding another's perspective and reshaping a communicative message to better fit into the communicatee's latitude of acceptance.

As with any theory, there are some results that refute initial findings of Haidt and Graham. A study conducted in 2013 found that Liberals and Conservatives share the morals of care, fairness, and purity when making decisions about influential people, implying that differences between political parties may have been overexaggerated in the original research (Frimer, Biesanz, Walker, & MacKinlay, 2013). Further, the theory does not necessarily replicate congruently in all samples. Culture should be considered a prominent variable in studies on moral foundations (Haidt, 2007). One study found that moral foundations theory does not replicate well with Black samples, as Black Americans are both historically more religious and more liberal than White American samples (Davis et al., 2016). Both of these studies suggest that moral foundations may be context-dependent and change in the presence of other variables.

*Future Considerations*

A few gaps in the research exist, as well as routes for future study. First, a consideration of additional mediating constructs to connect personality with political behavior should be explored (Lewis and Bates, 2011). Though moral values are a key mediating factor, there may be other factors worth considering as mediators, including social dominance orientation (Lewis and Bates, 2011). Emergence of a second mediating factor could present an alternative set of values to inform original research on moral foundations theory.

Secondly, future research might test how moral foundations theory applies to spaces beyond politics, such as the workplace, marketing, communities, small groups, etc. (Day et al., 2014). Moral foundations may replicate differently outside the contexts of Conservative and Liberal groups. The implication here suggests that moral foundations can provide the framework for finding middle ground in varying contexts, not just politics.

Also, studies that outline inconsistencies between Liberals and Conservatives should either be retested using a different sample to determine if other variables are at play, or whether Conservatives are perhaps truly more open to new ideas and/or more susceptible to persuasion than Liberals.

Finally, though the comprehensive research discussed has analyzed the relationship between moral values with both personality and persuasibility, far less has been done to connect the variables of personality and opinion change directly through moral values. In other words, research could survey pre-existing knowledge of dispositional factors like personality and moral values in order to rephrase a message to fit into one's latitude of acceptance. Researchers could also design a study that uses

the influence of big five personality theory to determine whether these traits can carry the same persuasive force as moral foundations.

Such a study would advance the field of communication by drawing from the disciplines of political science and psychology to inform the modern problem of political polarization. In learning more about message reframing, we can address the ways in which we individually contribute to ideological culture wars and begin to find a way to meet in the middle.

The research question to consider is therefore one that acknowledges the variables of persuasion, political orientation, and attitude. This thesis considers the following research question:

RQ1: Is morally charged language persuasive?

In order to answer RQ1, this study investigates the use of targeted political language on individuals who hold an opposing political stance to collect data on the persuasive effects of moral framing. This thesis therefore considers whether a liberal message framed using language that resonates with Conservatives is persuasive to Conservatives, and whether a conservative issue framed with language that resonates with Liberals is persuasive to Liberals. The reasoning behind this line of thinking is to draw a bottom line about the trait differences that define different political groups, and how that information can subsequently be used to understand the motivations behind that ideology. Because existing research indicates that Liberals resonate with individualizing language and Conservatives with binding language, the following hypotheses are proposed below:

H1: A liberal issue reframed with a binding moral will have a liberally persuasive effect on Conservatives.

H2: A conservative issue reframed with an individualizing moral will have a conservatively persuasive effect on Liberals.

Previous research points to these hypotheses as a potential explanation for polarization and political variance, suggesting that a bottom line can be drawn to generalize about each individual group, and help understand variance in political attitudes and the effects of moral reasoning.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

**Overview**

The goal of this research is to measure participants' political stance, moral frames on political stances, and the persuasion that occurs as a result of these experiments. For the sake of this study, Liberal is defined as anyone who identifies with the American Democratic political party, and Conservative is defined as anyone who identifies with the American Republican party. Polarization refers to the growing ideological divide in political stances. Moral foundations refer to the variance in human moral reasoning. Binding morals refer to those which are traditionally conservative in nature, and individualizing morals will refer to those which are liberal in nature.

**Participants**

The participants of this research study consisted of students in three separate large lecture style undergraduate classes at the University of Rhode Island. The first was COM 381 (Research Methods in Communication), and the second and third were two separate class sections of PSC 116 (International Politics). In total, approximately 650 surveys were distributed, and 461 completed responses were collected using volunteer sampling to recruit respondents. Participants' responses were completely anonymous, and no discrimination in respondent selection took place. Students were asked to self-identify demographic information. In total, 450 respondents were aged

18-24 (97.6%), 10 were aged 25-34 (2.2%), and 1 was age 35-44 (.2%). Both males and females were surveyed: 222 (48.2%) identified as female and 235 (51.1%) identified as male. There were a small number of respondents who identified as 'other' for a total of four participants (.9%). Most participants identified as White, for a total of 359 (77%). This was followed by 40 Hispanic respondents (8.7%), 27 Black respondents (5.9%), 20 Asian respondents (4.3%), 4 Native American respondents (.9%), and finally 10 'other or multiracial' respondents (2.2%). One participant chose not to self-identify their race/ethnicity. Socioeconomic economic status was recorded as well. 35 (7.6%) reported earning $100,000 or more in their household per year. This was followed by 34 (7.4%) falling between $90,000 and $99,999, 30 (6.5%) falling between $80,000 and $89,999, 30 (6.5%) falling between $60,000 and $69,999, 25 (5.4%) falling between $50,000 and $59,999, 22 (4.8%) falling between $40,000 and $49,999, 20 (4.3&) falling between $30,000 and $39,999, 17 (3.7%) falling between $20,000 and $29,999, 13 (2.8%) falling between $0 and $9,999, and finally 9 (2.0%) falling between $10,000 and $19,999.

Data collection and survey implementation took place during the Spring 2019 academic semester. The respondents were given 10 minutes of class time to complete the survey, but the link remained open for 48 hours to accommodate any additional submissions.

**Procedure**

This study design utilized a quantitative survey method consisting of Likert scale questions and morally framed passages. Participants were primed on the survey during class time and informed that the study would ask them to respond to questions

on their political attitudes to determine where college students fall on the political spectrum, but not that a persuasive experiment would take place. All respondents who completed the survey were offered classroom credit at the discretion of the professor of the course. Participants were offered an alternative set of questions focused on personality type, the 50 question BFPTSQ (Big Five Personality Trait Short Questionnaire) (Morizot, 2014) (see Appendix G), if they indicated discomfort towards taking a survey on political opinion but still wished to earn classroom credit. However, no participants chose to select this option. Surveys were administered via an anonymous link through Sakai by the professor of the class to ensure external validity of the sample. The survey took no more than 10 minutes to complete.

**Research Design**

The research design of this study drew from multiple existing studies, namely Feinberg & Willer's 2015 study entitled "From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?". The researchers created persuasive passages in 2015, three of which were replicated in this survey. Additionally, the general theory and moral language dictionary was used from Graham, Haidt, and Nosek's dictionary of moral language from their 2009 study, "Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Different Sets of Moral Foundations". Though elements of these two studies were used, the survey was distributed in a unique study design.

First, I administered a brief demographic questionnaire containing four questions on age, sex, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. All demographic questions are located in Appendix A. Then, respondents were asked to identify their political identity, ranging from strong Republican to strong Democrat, or not sure. In sum,

there were 267 Democratic respondents and 146 Republican respondents, while 48 respondents remained "unsure". However, unlike the Feinberg & Willer study that this thesis draws from, I chose not to exclude respondents who answered "independent" or "not sure". Rather, those respondents were led to additional questions that asked participants to identify whether they tend to lean more liberally or conservatively, in order to expand the sample size and respondent percentage. For the initial political identity question, a total of 176 (38.2%) participants answered, "not sure" or "independent". However, when those respondents were presented with a follow up question asking them to select the party they most resonate with, only 48 (10.4%) remained "not sure", suggesting that participants typically lean towards one political party. Therefore, those who answered "independent" or "not sure" were not omitted. After this initial set of questions, respondents were then given a series of political identity questions to determine whether they felt more connected with the political party they identify with, or the ideology of that party (see Appendix B). For example, respondents answered questions on a scale ranging from 1 to 4.0, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree (i.e. when people criticize Democrats, it feels like a personal insult). The full range of political identity questions are located in Appendix B.

Next, students answered a series of "feeling thermometers", in which they moved a slider on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from extremely unfavorable to extremely favorable, on the following four political issues: same-sex marriage, military spending, adopting English as the official language of the United States, and Universal Healthcare. These sliders were randomized so that each participant saw the

prompts in a different order. Note that two of these topics are covered in the

experiment portion of the survey, but two additional questions were added to avoid

priming. Two of the sliders focused on pro-Liberal issues (same-sex marriage,

universal health care) and two of the sliders focused on pro-Conservative issues

(military spending, adopting English as the official language of the United States).

Feeling thermometers gauged participants general attitudes towards social issues

ranging from 1 to 7.0, where 1=very negative, 2=somewhat negative, 3=negative,

4=neutral, 5=somewhat positive, 6=positive, 7=very positive. The full scale is located

in Appendix C.

Finally, a series of personality-based questions consisting of the TIPI (Ten

Item Personality Inventory) scale were administered as distracting questions and were

randomized to ensure that participants did not shift responses after reading and

answering these questions. The full scale is located in Appendix D. Respondents

answered personality questions on items such as extraversion, dependability, and

stressfulness on a scale ranging from 1 to 7.0, 1=disagree strongly,  2=disagree

moderately, 3=disagree a little, 4=neither agree nor disagree, 5 =agree a little, 6=agree

moderately, 7=agree strongly.

I then presented participants with persuasive arguments: the experimental

portion of the survey (see Appendices E and F for full passages). These passages are

framed as an argument in support of a political issue in favor of a liberal issue or a

conservative issue: universal health care and adoption of English as the official

language of the United States, respectively (Feinberg & Willer, 2015). These two

issues were politically reframed and presented in the form of a short passage in favor

of that stance using either conservative (binding) or liberal (individualizing) language. Therefore, there are four messages in total: a liberal message and binding frame, a liberal message and an individualizing frame, a conservative message and binding frame, and a conservative message and individualizing frame. These paragraphs were "locked" for 30 seconds to ensure that students did not click through the page before they finished reading the passage. I then measured participants' attitudes towards each of these paragraphs. For example, regarding universal health care, ("I am in favor of universal health care") ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (neutral) to 7 (strongly disagree). Hypothetically, each morally reframed message will be more persuasive to those with an opposing political viewpoint than those who read a message and moral frame that aligns with their political stance. All sections used were originally adapted and empirically tested by Feinberg & Willer and are stated verbatim in Appendices E and F. However, the conservatively framed passage on English as the official language of the United States – "English as the Official USA Language" – was not part of the original researcher's methodology, and I wrote it utilizing the dictionary of moral terms as defined by Haidt, Nosek and Graham (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek, 2009). I also incorporated a section of the official language used in the 2016 Republican Party Platform regarding making English as the official language of the United States. This phrasing was taken verbatim and added to the persuasive paragraph (see Appendix E).

Each participant was asked to read and answer questions on two messages: a health care argument and an official language argument. However, in order to ensure that participants were not primed or swayed by the messages, each student received a randomized combination of the message possibilities. The design was a 2x3 factorial

design, including both a conservative issue (official language) and a liberal issue (universal health care). Within those two categories, there were three possible messages: a persuasive message containing conservatively moral language and follow up questions, a persuasive message containing liberally moral language and follow up questions, and a control group who saw only the follow up questions. Each student saw one of the three versions in each category. See table 1 below for reference:

Table 1: Experimental Design(s)

|  |  | Binding Frame | Individualizing Frame | Control |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Universal health care | Liberal message | Liberal message<br><br>Binding (Purity) frame<br><br>H1: Liberally persuasive to Conservatives | Liberal message<br><br>Individualizing (Fairness) frame<br><br>Strengthen Liberal attitudes | Health Care attitude questions only, no reading |
| Adopting English as the official language of the United States | Conservative message | Conservative message<br><br>Binding (Ingroup) frame<br><br>Will strengthen Conservative attitudes | Conservative message<br><br>Individualizing (Fairness) frame<br><br>H2: Conservatively persuasive to Liberals | English Language as Official Language Attitude questions only, no reading |

The control existed to better validate the accuracy of the framed messages as the persuasive variable. Validity will be ensured by issuing every combination of messages to participants rather than allotting the same combination of messages to a larger group of respondents. Validity will also be ensured by utilizing a 7-point scale to measure agreement or disagreement. Because political issues and persuasion are not a matter of black and white, it will be more reliable to provide participants with a larger range. Reliability will be ensured by utilizing paragraphs and survey questions

that have been empirically tested by Feinberg & Willer. Though the college aged population of this study may affect the external validity of this study, internal validity is nevertheless very strong as a result of the randomization and design of the methodology.

CHAPTER 4


FINDINGS


*Health Care Experiment*

Experiment 1 analyzed responses to attitudes on universal health care.

Bonferroni post hoc mean comparisons were conducted to examine the differences

between the control, and experimental conditions, as well as differences between

Republican and Conservative respondents. MANOVA was used to test multiple

dependent variables and independent variables (see Appendix H for full tables). The

figures listed in Chapter 4 were created by replicating results via regression analysis.

Overall, the multivariate tests for the Health Care Experiment show a

significant main effect for political preference $F(3, 461) = 76.189$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .361$.

There was a nonsignificant effect for the health care experiment $F(6, 461) = 1.063$, $p <$

.383, $\eta^2 = .008$ overall.

Between subject effects yielded significant results when the independent

variable of political identity is compared with each dependent variable of attitude. The

relationship between political identity and attitude towards favoring Universal Health

Care is $F(1, 461) = 218.262$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .349$. The relationship between political

identity and attitude of no need for Universal Health Care is $F(1, 461) = 171.172$, $p$

$<.001$, $\eta^2 = .296$. The relationship between political identity and attitude towards

Universal Health Care will solve the nation's problems is $F(1, 461) = 148.575$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .267$.

Between subject effects yielded insignificant results when the independent variable of the health care experimental conditions are compared with each dependent variable of attitude. The relationship between the health care experiment and attitude towards favoring universal health care is $F(2, 461) = 2.797$, $p < .062$, $\eta^2 = .014$. The relationship between the health care experiment and attitude of no need for Universal Health Care is $F(2, 461) = 2.321$, $p < .099$, $\eta^2 = .011$. The relationship between the health care experiment and attitude towards whether universal health care will solve the nation's problems is $F(2, 461) = 1.423$, $p < .242$, $\eta^2 = .007$.

While the overall experimental treatment produced no significant results, significant data did occur under the specific frames of the experiment. Under the dependent variable "I am in favor of universal health care", the fairness frame was significant $p < .05$ when compared with the control. Additionally, the dependent variable "There is no need for universal health care" yielded significant results under the fairness frame as well, where $p < .05$ when compared with the control.

Figure 1: I am in favor of universal health care
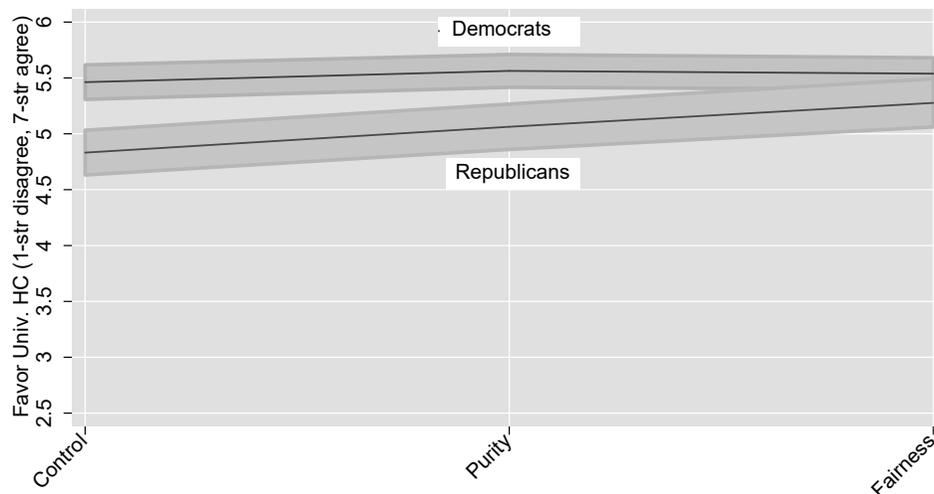
Figure 2: There is no need for universal health care



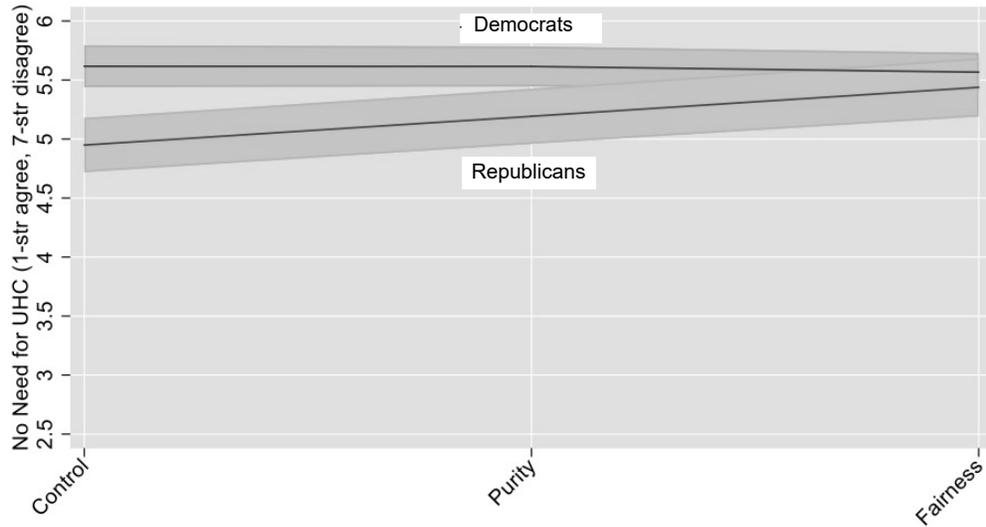Figure 3: Universal health care would solve the nation's problems
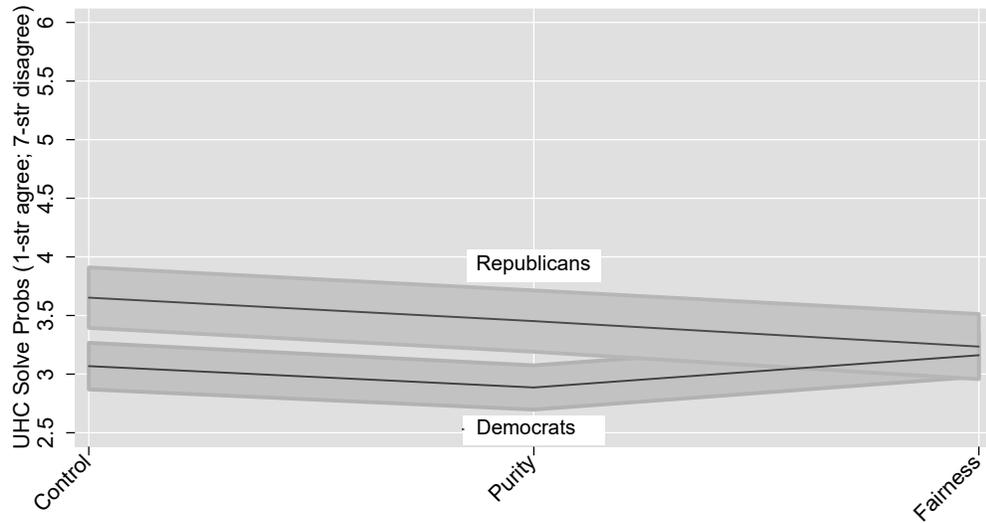


More specifically, Hypothesis 1 states that a Liberal issue reframed with binding moral language will have a liberally persuasive effect on Conservatives. The data supports this notion but was not statistically significant. On the question of whether respondents were in favor of universal health care, Republicans in the control

(M = 4.27, SD = 1.634) were less in favor of universal health care than Republicans in the purity frame (M = 3.96, SD = 1.865) and the fairness frame (M = 3.63, SD = 1.648). The fairness frame was most effective in persuading Republicans. Democratic responses were more stagnant, with the control (M = 2.03, SD = 1.198) more closely aligned with the fairness frame (M = 1.87, SD = 1.017) and the purity frame (M = 1.85, SD = 1.010), respectively. Significant results were also seen under the dependent variable "There is no need for universal health care", where Republicans in the control group (M = 3.94, SD = 1.626) differed from attitudes of those in the purity frame (M = 4.25, SD = 1.820) and the fairness frame (M = 4.65, SD = 1.660). The fairness frame in this variable was also more effective in persuading Republicans. See Appendix H for full table of descriptive statistics.

*English as the Official Language of The US Experiment*

Overall, the multivariate tests for the official language Experiment show a significant main effect for political preference $F(3, 461) = 33.475$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .199$. There was a nonsignificant effect for the official language experimental treatment conditions $F(6, 461) = 1.170$, $p < .32$, $\eta^2 = .009$ overall.

Between subject effects yielded significant results when the independent variable of political identity is compared with each dependent variable of attitude. The relationship between political identity and attitude towards favoring English as the official language of the United States is $F(1, 461) = 85.040$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .173$. The relationship between political identity and attitude of whether the US should or should not have an official language is $F(1, 461) = 90.078$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .181$. The

relationship between political identity and attitude towards whether making English the official language of the US is a mistake is $F(1, 461) = 68.042$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .143$.

Between subject effects yielded insignificant results when the independent variable of the official language experimental conditions are compared with each dependent variable of attitude. The relationship between the official language experiment and attitude favoring English as the official language of the United States is $F(2, 461) = 2.462$, $p < .087$, $\eta^2 = .012$. The relationship between the official language experiment and attitude of whether the US should or should not have an official language is $F(2, 461) = 1.657$, $p < .192$, $\eta^2 = .008$. The relationship between the English language experiment and attitude towards whether making English the official language of the US is a mistake is $F(2, 461) = 1.881$, $p < .154$, $\eta^2 = .009$.

While no significant results came about from the overall experimental treatment, significant results did occur under the specific frames of the experiment. Under the dependent variable "I am in favor of making English the official language of the United States", the fairness frame was significant $p < .05$ when compared with the control. The remainder of the moral frames were not significant when compared with the control.

Figure 4: I am in Favor of making English the Official Language of the United States
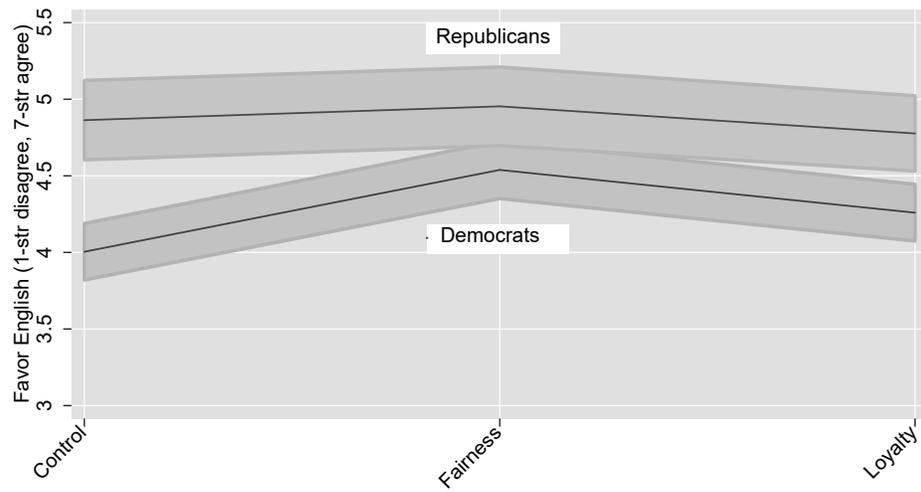


Figure 5: There is no need for a United States official language
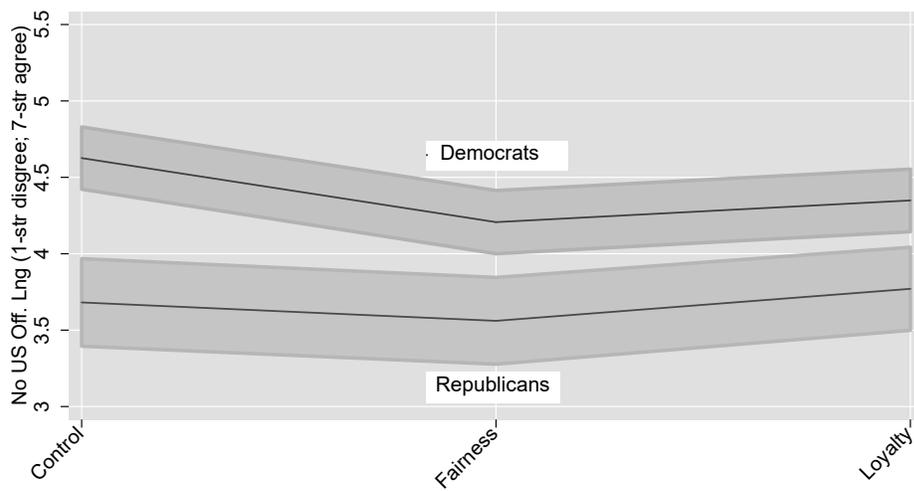
Figure 6: Making English the official language of the United States would be a

mistake
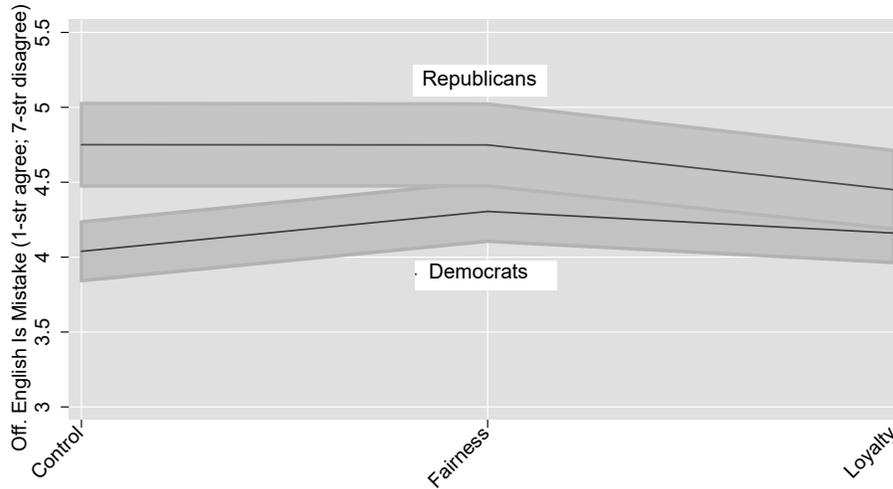


More specifically, Hypothesis 2 states that a Conservative issue reframed with individualizing moral language will have a conservatively persuasive effect on liberals. The data supports this notion but was not statistically significant. On the question of whether respondents were in favor of English as the official language of the United States, Democrats in the control (M = 4.38, SD = 1.631) were less in favor of creating an official language than democrats in the fairness frame (M = 3.76, SD = 1.779) and the loyalty frame (M = 4.04, SD = 1.764). The fairness frame was most effective in persuading democrats. Republican responses were more stagnant, with the control (M = 2.43, SD = 1.424) more closely aligned with the fairness frame (M = 2.29, SD = 1.208). The fairness frame in this variable was effective in persuading both republicans and democrats. See Appendix H for full table of descriptive statistics.

DISCUSSION

The initial goal of this research project was to find a way to use preexisting knowledge of an individual's traits to persuade them on an issue they might not otherwise agree with. However, in conducting this study and analyzing the results, the implications towards both interpersonal communication and public discourse as a whole play an equally crucial role in understanding the causes and effects of the language we use every day.

Overall, political preference was statistically significant in predicting differences in respondent's attitudes. As expected, Republican and Democratic respondents held pointedly different opinions towards each of the issues discussed. Outside of the hypotheses, the results seem to confirm that the use of moral language in political scenarios does, in fact, lead to persuasion. While the overall experiments were not significant when compared with the dependent variables overall, some of the independent moral frames were statistically significant, leading to interesting and unplanned conclusions of this study. These findings could heavily implicate many sectors, and the information discussed should be used intentionally and cautiously.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that a liberal message, framed with binding language that Conservatives would resonate with, would be liberally persuasive to Conservatives. Although the purity frame did move the average answer towards agreement for each of the three dependent variables, it was not statistically significant. However, the fairness frame was effective in persuading Republican respondents to agree with a liberal message. While attitude did shift compared with the control, this

finding is at odds with the hypothesis, which projected that fairness language would not persuade Republican respondents. As predicted, Liberal respondent attitudes remained stagnant within both the fairness and the purity frames, compared with the control in each of the three dependent variables. This finding is, however, in line with an initial study by Haidt and Graham in 2007 which found that Conservatives may recognize all five moral foundations, whereas Liberals can only recognize three. Additionally, multiple studies found that differences between Liberals and Conservatives may have been overexaggerated in original research (Frimer et al., 2013; Graham et al., 2012).

Hypothesis 2 stated that a conservative message, framed with individualizing language that Liberals would resonate with, would be conservatively persuasive to Liberals. In this experiment, the fairness frame was indeed effective and statistically significant in persuading Liberals to agree with making English the official language of the United States. Interestingly, the fairness frame was also effective in persuading Conservatives to agree with the argument. Further, the loyalty frame was not only not effective, but seemed to push both Conservatives and Liberals away from the overall argument, directly contradicting the hypothesis. These findings are also at odds with the Day et al. 2014 study which showed that Liberals were not susceptible to persuasive campaigns in the way that Conservatives were. In contrast, this thesis finds that both Liberal and Conservative respondents were equally responsive to the persuasive framing of this experiment.

Given that the fairness frame was most effective across the board, the implication of fairness language on depolarization is worth further investigation. It

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was not hypothesized that the fairness frame would be able to persuade both Liberals and Conservatives, suggesting that depolarization may be possible, and should be further tested. The consistent language within this frame included terms like "equality, justice, care, opportunities", and seemed to resonate with all of the respondents, evenly. As mentioned above, Conservatives do in fact recognize all five morals, where Liberals only recognize three (Haidt & Graham 2007). This is in accordance with this study's findings, where Republicans and Liberals were both persuaded by fairness arguments.

Equally as worthy of a further conversation is why the loyalty frame seemed not to work. One potential explanation for this could be that this was the only passage I wrote myself, where the other passages were written and empirically tested in the original study. In other words, the language used may have been too harsh, and possibly pushed people in the other direction. However, given that a portion of the passage was taken directly from the language used in the 2016 Republican National Convention's Official Platform, these results raise questions about how and why Americans still hold on to these attitudes of loyalty, where they did not during this experiment. Nevertheless, this example could be a testament to how polarization works, where the other experiments seem to support the idea of depolarization.

Strength of argument could be one potential confounding variable, given that the arguments in the original study were strong and well supported, alongside the use of moral language. Adding an additional frame with new language might be fine in theory, but perhaps was not as well researched and implemented as the original researcher's passages. The passages also varied in their core arguments. For example,

while the assumption is that fairness language made the health care argument stronger, only the purity argument used polarizing medical terms like tuberculosis and hepatitis. The presence of those terms may have been the persuasive factor rather than moral language, or the argument itself. In the future, researchers should be very intentional about the argument formation process to establish nearly parallel arguments in all areas except for moral language.

Alternatively, demographic likely played a large role in explaining the results that did not align with the initial researcher's data. My survey respondents were nearly all traditional college-aged students, at a public State University, in Rhode Island – a historically blue state, with the socioeconomic privilege of access to education. Though a significant sample of respondents identified as Republican, it is possible that these respondents might identify as "fiscal" Conservatives, but very well may be more socially liberal. Alternatively, respondents overall may be first learning about the world of politics, political science, and United States government as young adults. Many participants were just barely of voting age, making pliability a potential confounding variable as well. Generational differences are therefore likely a factor in the overall results. Given that fairness language has so frequently been found to especially resonate with this particular generation of younger individuals, this may also explain the variance in fairness language from the original study's findings.

It is for this specific reason that the first and most critical future consideration would be to retest this study on the American public rather than college students, alone. Because initial results are promising, it would be a critical test to determine how the majority of Americans respond to such questioning and persuasion. I would

speculate that fairness language, though effective when tested with college students, may not be as persuasive to Americans as a whole. Given that the RNC used exact language in its official 2016 platform, and won, it's very possible that this language is not as off-putting to the majority of the country as it is to young college students. One potential explanation for this is that, while loyalty language pushes the younger generation(s) away from the argument, the same language may pull other generations in an opposite attitudinal direction. Paying closer attention to these generational differences in a future study would be a critical variable to test for to determine where people fall across the spectrum.

It should also be a focus for future researchers to take the core findings of this study and replicate them outside of American politics. For example, moral language was originally established and tested within the realm of political science but should be tested elsewhere to draw a general big picture about the ways in which persuasion can occur. Can moral arguments be used within a corporate organization? Interculturally? Can the same language be used, or would a new set of terms be needed to accurately describe the setting? These are all questions worth investigating, and future research could replicate this study in a different sphere to determine what kind of language influences perception in different domains.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Given the scope of this topic and the present-day relevance of political polarization, a negative – but understandable – outlook might be whether the findings of this research could be used to manipulate others for political gain or attempt to use polarization as a weapon for further disagreement and national unrest. While the positive cannot exist without the negative, the overall existence of polarization does seem to be unintentional. With the intentional introduction of a way to decrease political disagreement, one would hope that this information can be used both intentionally and critically for public good.

Nevertheless, these finding suggest that there are very real ways to introduce value in an opposing stance, and to unify divided attitudes both interpersonally and in the realm of public discourse. With this information, government officials, journalists, instructors, business leaders, and especially the average American citizen can speak more intentionally and use specific language to help others see their own point of view.

It's true that, if the survey respondents had been presented with a follow-up questionnaire, the odds of these attitudes remaining consistent are highly unlikely However, what we know about persuasion is that it's subtle, it's largely unnoticeable to the subject, and that it happens over time. The implications to the greater political atmosphere in America are therefore especially important. The power of the language

we use is immense, and the sooner we use this knowledge intentionally, the sooner we can begin to find a common ground.

APPENDICES

*Appendix A*

Demographic Questions

Q1 Which category below includes your age?
18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65 or older

Q2 Which race/ethnicity best describes you? Please choose only one.
American Indian or Alaskan Native
Asian/Pacific Islander
Black or African-American
Hispanic
White
Other (please specify)

Q3 What is your gender?
Male
Female
Other (please specify)

Q4 What was the total combined income of all members of your household in 2018?
$0-$9,999
$10,000 – $19,999
$20,000 – $29,999
$30,000 - $39,999
$40,000 – $49,999
$50,000 – $59,999
$60,000 – $69,999
$70,000 – $79,999
$80,000 – $89,999
$90,000 – $99,999
$100,000 or more


*Appendix B*

Political Identity Questions

Q5 With what political party do you most identify?

Strong Democrat
Moderate Democrat
Independent
Moderate Republican
Strong Republican
Not sure

Follow up question(s) if Independent/Not Sure

Q6 Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democrats or the Republicans?
Democrats
Republicans
Not sure

Follow up question(s) if Republican

Q7 How important is being Republican to you?
Extremely important
Very important
Slightly important
Not at all important

Q8 Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

When people criticize Republicans, it feels like a personal insult.
Strongly disagree (1)   Somewhat disagree (2) Somewhat agree (3)  Strongly agree (4)

When I meet someone who supports the Republicans, I feel connected.
Strongly disagree (1)   Somewhat disagree (2) Somewhat agree (3)  Strongly agree (4)

When people praise Republicans, it makes me feel good.
Strongly disagree (1)   Somewhat disagree (2) Somewhat agree (3)  Strongly agree (4)

Follow up question(s) if Democrat

Q9 How important is being Democrat to you?
Extremely important
Very important
Slightly important
Not at all important

Q10 Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

When people criticize Democrats, it feels like a personal insult.
Strongly disagree (1)   Somewhat disagree (2) Somewhat agree (3)  Strongly agree (4)

When I meet someone who supports the Democrats, I feel connected.
Strongly disagree (1)  Somewhat disagree (2) Somewhat agree (3)  Strongly agree (4)

When people praise Democrats, it makes me feel good.
Strongly disagree (1)  Somewhat disagree (2) Somewhat agree (3)  Strongly agree (4)

*Appendix C*

Feeling Thermometers

Q11 Use the feeling thermometer to rate your personal feelings toward the policies below by sliding the scale to any value on the thermometer between 1 and 7. The warmer or more favorable you feel toward the policy, the higher the number you should give it. The colder or less favorable you feel, the lower the number.  If you feel neither warm nor cold toward the policy, rate it 4.

Extremely unfavorable                     Neutral                Extremely favorable

1        2        3        4        5        6        7

Q11-1 Same Sex Marriage
Q11-2 Adopting English as the Official Language of the United States
Q11-3 Military Spending
Q11-4 Universal Health Care

*Appendix D*

TIPI Scale (Ten Item Personality Scale)

Q12 I see myself as:

Q12-1 Extraverted, enthusiastic
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-2 Critical, quarrelsome
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-3 Dependable, self-disciplined
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-4 Anxious, easily upset

Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-5 Open to new experiences, complex
Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-6 Reserved, quiet
Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-7 Sympathetic, warm
Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-8 Disorganized, careless
Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-9 Calm, emotionally stable
Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)

Q12-10 Conventional, uncreative
Strongly agree (1)    Agree (2)    Somewhat agree (3)    Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)    Disagree (6)    Strongly disagree (7)


*Appendix E*

Experiment 1 – Universal Health Care

Passage 1: Purity frame

"Health Care for Everyone"

The absence of universal healthcare in the United States practically ensures that we
will have unclean, infected, and diseased Americans walking among us. The uninsured
often develop "diseases of poverty", such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, toxocariasis, and
other viruses or parasites that can easily spread throughout the population. Many of
these diseases have grotesque symptoms like yellowing of the skin and eyes, coughing
up bloody mucus, itchy rashes, and lesions. These diseases are contagious and spread
through the population infecting many, including those who are not poor.

The spread of these diseases, however, would be easily preventable if all Americans
had healthcare. Individuals infected with these contagious diseases would become

much less likely to spread their sickness to others, because doctors could provide them with medicine to cure or control the disease, and doctors could educate these sick patients on how to avoid infecting others.

The uninsured are especially susceptible to contracting infectious diseases because they are often the poorest among us, suffering from malnutrition and stress, both of which lead to weakened immune systems. So, this means that the uninsured tend to serve as repositories that harbor and cultivate contagions which can then, after incubating, more easily spread to others in the population. Overall, universal healthcare is a way of purifying America from some of its most infectious diseases, making it less and less likely that healthy individuals will ever encounter these diseases. Everyone should have healthcare.


Passage 2: Fairness frame

"Health Care for Everyone"

In its current state healthcare in the U.S. is inherently unfair and unjust. We need reform to ensure that everyone, not just the rich and the fortunate, has access to the doctors and the medicine they need.

An estimated 50 million American citizens are without adequate insurance coverage – including millions of children who have done nothing wrong. Because most American families obtain healthcare coverage from long term employers, the blue-collar sector of the labor force is unfairly hit the hardest. These laborers typically work for hourly wages in temporary jobs which do not offer comprehensive health insurance. These are honest, law-abiding citizens who are being unfairly denied access to resources their wealthier counterparts are entitled to, simply because they make less money.

To make matters worse, the poorest are often the ones who are at the highest risk for health problems. Individuals in the lower economic brackets suffer more diabetes, cancer, asthma, emphysema, hypertension, and heart disease largely due to the financial stress they experience on a day-to-day basis. They are the ones who need healthcare the most, but unjustly are the ones who have the least access to it. Health care is a human right and should be accessible to all.


Attitude Questions

Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

I am in favor of universal health care.
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

There is no need for universal health care in America.
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

Universal health care will help solve many of America's problems.
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

*Appendix F*

Experiment 2 – Making English the Official Language of the United States

Passage 1: Fairness frame

"Leveling the Playing Field with English"

When immigrants come to America they have a choice – learn English or not. Many choose to not learn it. Who can blame them? It is not easy learning another language. But the choice to not learn English puts these new immigrants at an extreme disadvantage in society. Immigrants who do not speak English earn substantially less money, are rarely treated as equal members of society, and are often discriminated against. For these reasons, we should make English the official language of the US. Doing so will not force immigrants to stop speaking their native language, it will simply push them to learn English so they have a greater chance of succeeding and being treated more equally by other members of society.

Immigrants who do not speak English are often treated unfairly in their day-to-day lives – even discriminated against. They face a phenomenon called "language discrimination", where they are treated unfairly and as second-class citizens because they do not speak English. People often ignore them or deny them services (for example, they won't be seated at restaurants), they will be treated worse by authorities (for example, police officers will treat them more like criminals when being interviewed), and they even receive harsher sentencing in court.

Making English the official language of the United States will help level the playing field for these immigrants. It will compel them to learn English and will authorize the government to provide learning support for them. Instead of paying millions of tax dollars (an estimated $260 million each year) on translating documents, we should invest in helping them learning English. Making English the official language is key to giving all immigrants an equal opportunity at succeeding in America.

Passage 2: Loyalty frame

"English is the Language of our Homeland"

When immigrants come to America they have a choice – learn English or not. Many choose to not learn it. Why wouldn't they? If they expect to become true American citizens, it's only respectful to assimilate to American tradition. But the choice to not learn English makes these new immigrants defiant to our society and culture.

English has been our nation's primary language for hundreds of years, and outsiders coming in should know that we value tradition. The greatest asset to our American way is the hardworking American. True patriotic families know this, and if immigrants wish to join the American community in solidarity, learning English is a necessity.

We are particularly grateful to the thousands of new legal immigrants, many of them not yet citizens, who are serving in the Armed Forces and among first responders. Their patriotism inspires other immigrates to follow the rules and respect the Laws of this great country. To that end, we both encourage the preservation of heritage tongues and support English as the nation's official language, a unifying force essential for the advancement of immigrant communities and our nation as a whole. Together, we can make our country better.

Attitude Questions

Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

I am in favor of making English the official language of the United States.
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

The United States should not have an official language.
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

Making English the official language of US would be mistake.
Strongly agree (1)   Agree (2)   Somewhat agree (3)   Neither agree nor disagree (4)
Somewhat disagree (5)   Disagree (6)   Strongly disagree (7)

*Appendix G*

Alternative to study: Big Five Personality Trait Short Questionnaire (BFPTSQ)

I see myself as someone who . . .
Openness
Is original, often has new ideas.
Is curious about many different things.

Is ingenious, reflects a lot.
Has a lot of imagination.
Is inventive, creative.
Likes artistic or aesthetic experiences.
Is not really interested in different cultures, their customs and values. Likes to reflect, tries to understand complex things.
Has few artistic interests.
Is sophisticated when it comes to art, music or literature.

Extraversion
Likes to talk, expresses his/her opinion.
Is reserved or shy, has difficulty approaching others.
Is full of energy, likes to always be active.
Is a leader, capable of convincing others.
Is rather quiet, does not talk a lot.
Shows self-confidence, is able to assert himself/herself.
Is timid, shy.
Is extraverted, sociable.
Likes exciting activities, which provide thrills.
Has a tendency to laugh and have fun easily.

Agreeableness
Has a tendency to criticize others.
Is helpful and generous with others.
Provokes quarrels or arguments with others.
Is lenient, forgives easily.
Generally trusts others.
Can be distant and cold towards others.
Is considerate and kind to almost everyone.
Can sometimes be rude or mean towards others.
Likes to cooperate with others.
Can deceive and manipulate people to get what he/she want.

Conscientiousness
Works conscientiously, does the things he/she has to do well.
Can be a little careless and negligent.
Is a reliable student/worker, who can be counted on.
Has a tendency to be disorganized, messy.
Has a tendency to be lazy.
Perseveres until the task at hand is completed.
Does things efficiently, works well and quickly.
Plans things that need to be done and follows through the plans.
Is easily distracted, has difficulty remaining attentive.
Can do things impulsively without thinking about the consequences.

Emotional Stability

Has a tendency to be easily depressed, sad.
Is generally relaxed, handles stress well.
Can be tense, stressed out.
Worries a lot about many things.
Is emotionally stable, not easily upset.
Can be moody.
Stays calm in tense or stressful situations.
Can easily become nervous.
Has a tendency to feel inferior to others.
Has a tendency to be easily irritated.

*Appendix H*

Data Analysis Tables

## Descriptive Statistics (Official Language)

| | 2 category political id: includes polid followup respondents 0-Dem, 1-Rep | experimental conditions for English | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor making English official language | Democrats | Control | 4.38 | 1.631 | 91 |
| | | Fairness | 3.79 | 1.779 | 87 |
| | | Loyalty | 4.04 | 1.764 | 89 |
| | | Total | 4.08 | 1.736 | 267 |
| | Republicans | Control | 2.43 | 1.424 | 46 |
| | | Fairness | 2.29 | 1.208 | 49 |
| | | Loyalty | 2.86 | 1.625 | 51 |
| | | Total | 2.53 | 1.444 | 146 |
| | Total | Control | 3.73 | 1.813 | 137 |
| | | Fairness | 3.25 | 1.750 | 136 |
| | | Loyalty | 3.61 | 1.802 | 140 |
| | | Total | 3.53 | 1.796 | 413 |
| combined responses - US should not have an official language | Democrats | Control | 3.02 | 1.520 | 91 |
| | | Fairness | 3.47 | 1.627 | 87 |
| | | Loyalty | 3.38 | 1.620 | 89 |
| | | Total | 3.29 | 1.595 | 267 |
| | Republicans | Control | 4.96 | 1.619 | 46 |
| | | Fairness | 5.14 | 1.646 | 49 |
| | | Loyalty | 4.57 | 1.857 | 51 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Total | 4.88 | 1.720 | 146 |
| | Total | Control | 3.67 | 1.799 | 137 |
| | | Fairness | 4.07 | 1.816 | 136 |
| | | Loyalty | 3.81 | 1.798 | 140 |
| | | Total | 3.85 | 1.807 | 413 |
| combined responses - making English official lang is a mistake | Democrats | Control | 3.68 | 1.591 | 91 |
| | | Fairness | 3.99 | 1.681 | 87 |
| | | Loyalty | 3.88 | 1.622 | 89 |
| | | Total | 3.85 | 1.630 | 267 |
| | Republicans | Control | 5.39 | 1.390 | 46 |
| | | Fairness | 5.45 | 1.459 | 49 |
| | | Loyalty | 4.78 | 1.736 | 51 |
| | | Total | 5.20 | 1.561 | 146 |
| | Total | Control | 4.26 | 1.724 | 137 |
| | | Fairness | 4.51 | 1.747 | 136 |
| | | Loyalty | 4.21 | 1.715 | 140 |
| | | Total | 4.32 | 1.730 | 413 |

## Post Hoc Tests - experimental conditions for English
### Multiple Comparisons

Bonferroni

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for English | (J) experimental conditions for English | Mean Difference (I-J) |
|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor making English official language | Control | Fairness | .48[*] |
| | | Loyalty | .12 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.48[*] |
| | | Loyalty | -.36 |
| | Loyalty | Control | -.12 |
| | | Fairness | .36 |
| combined responses - US should not have an official language | Control | Fairness | -.40 |
| | | Loyalty | -.14 |
| | Fairness | Control | .40 |
| | | Loyalty | .26 |
| | Loyalty | Control | .14 |
| | | Fairness | -.26 |
| combined responses - | Control | Fairness | -.26 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| making English official lang is a mistake | | Loyalty | .05 |
| | Fairness | Control | .26 |
| | | Loyalty | .31 |
| | Loyalty | Control | -.05 |
| | | Fairness | -.31 |

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for English | (J) experimental conditions for English | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor making English official language | Control | Fairness | .197 | .046 |
| | | Loyalty | .196 | 1.000 |
| | Fairness | Control | .197 | .046 |
| | | Loyalty | .196 | .192 |
| | Loyalty | Control | .196 | 1.000 |
| | | Fairness | .196 | .192 |
| combined responses - US should not have an official language | Control | Fairness | .198 | .128 |
| | | Loyalty | .196 | 1.000 |
| | Fairness | Control | .198 | .128 |
| | | Loyalty | .197 | .565 |
| | Loyalty | Control | .196 | 1.000 |
| | | Fairness | .197 | .565 |
| combined responses - making English official lang is a mistake | Control | Fairness | .194 | .545 |
| | | Loyalty | .192 | 1.000 |
| | Fairness | Control | .194 | .545 |
| | | Loyalty | .193 | .333 |
| | Loyalty | Control | .192 | 1.000 |
| | | Fairness | .193 | .333 |

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for English | (J) experimental conditions for English | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Lower Bound | |
| combined responses - favor making English | Control | Fairness | .01 | |
| | | Loyalty | -.35 | |

| Dependent Variable | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| official language | Fairness | Control | -.95 |
| | | Loyalty | -.84 |
| | Loyalty | Control | -.59 |
| | | Fairness | -.11 |
| combined responses - US should not have an official language | Control | Fairness | -.88 |
| | | Loyalty | -.61 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.07 |
| | | Loyalty | -.21 |
| | Loyalty | Control | -.33 |
| | | Fairness | -.73 |
| combined responses - making English official lang is a mistake | Control | Fairness | -.72 |
| | | Loyalty | -.41 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.21 |
| | | Loyalty | -.16 |
| | Loyalty | Control | -.51 |
| | | Fairness | -.77 |

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for English | (J) experimental conditions for English | 95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound |
|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor making English official language | Control | Fairness | .95 |
| | | Loyalty | .59 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.01 |
| | | Loyalty | .11 |
| | Loyalty | Control | .35 |
| | | Fairness | .84 |
| combined responses - US should not have an official language | Control | Fairness | .07 |
| | | Loyalty | .33 |
| | Fairness | Control | .88 |
| | | Loyalty | .73 |
| | Loyalty | Control | .61 |
| | | Fairness | .21 |
| combined responses - making English official | Control | Fairness | .21 |
| | | Loyalty | .51 |

| lang is a mistake | Fairness | Control | .72 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Loyalty | .77 |
| | Loyalty | Control | .41 |
| | | Fairness | .16 |

Based on observed means.

 The error term is Mean Square(Error) = 2.560.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

## Descriptive Statistics – health care experiment

| | 2 category political id: includes polid followup respondents 0-Dem, 1-Rep | experimental conditions for health care | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor universal health care | Democrats | Control | 2.03 | 1.198 | 79 |
| | | Purity | 1.85 | 1.010 | 91 |
| | | Fairness | 1.87 | 1.017 | 97 |
| | | Total | 1.91 | 1.070 | 267 |
| | Republicans | Control | 4.27 | 1.634 | 52 |
| | | Purity | 3.96 | 1.865 | 51 |
| | | Fairness | 3.63 | 1.648 | 43 |
| | | Total | 3.97 | 1.730 | 146 |
| | Total | Control | 2.92 | 1.767 | 131 |
| | | Purity | 2.61 | 1.709 | 142 |
| | | Fairness | 2.41 | 1.483 | 140 |
| | | Total | 2.64 | 1.665 | 413 |
| combined responses - no need for universal health care | Democrats | Control | 6.08 | 1.130 | 79 |
| | | Purity | 6.15 | 1.064 | 91 |
| | | Fairness | 6.11 | 1.163 | 97 |
| | | Total | 6.12 | 1.116 | 267 |
| | Republicans | Control | 3.94 | 1.626 | 52 |
| | | Purity | 4.25 | 1.820 | 51 |
| | | Fairness | 4.65 | 1.660 | 43 |
| | | Total | 4.26 | 1.718 | 146 |
| | Total | Control | 5.23 | 1.703 | 131 |
| | | Purity | 5.47 | 1.653 | 142 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Fairness | 5.66 | 1.492 | 140 |
| | | Total | 5.46 | 1.622 | 413 |
| combined responses - universal health care will solve US problems | Democrats | Control | 2.61 | 1.295 | 79 |
| | | Purity | 2.37 | 1.102 | 91 |
| | | Fairness | 2.63 | 1.325 | 97 |
| | | Total | 2.54 | 1.245 | 267 |
| | Republicans | Control | 4.62 | 1.817 | 52 |
| | | Purity | 4.37 | 1.587 | 51 |
| | | Fairness | 4.02 | 1.752 | 43 |
| | | Total | 4.36 | 1.725 | 146 |
| | Total | Control | 3.40 | 1.809 | 131 |
| | | Purity | 3.09 | 1.611 | 142 |
| | | Fairness | 3.06 | 1.599 | 140 |
| | | Total | 3.18 | 1.676 | 413 |

## Post Hoc Tests - experimental conditions for health care

### Multiple Comparisons

Bonferroni

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for health care | (J) experimental conditions for health care | Mean Difference (I-J) |
|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor universal health care | Control | Purity | .31 |
| | | Fairness | .51[*] |
| | Purity | Control | -.31 |
| | | Fairness | .20 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.51[*] |
| | | Purity | -.20 |
| combined responses - no need for universal health care | Control | Purity | -.24 |
| | | Fairness | -.44[*] |
| | Purity | Control | .24 |
| | | Fairness | -.19 |
| | Fairness | Control | .44[*] |
| | | Purity | .19 |
| combined responses - universal health care will solve US problems | Control | Purity | .31 |
| | | Fairness | .35 |
| | Purity | Control | -.31 |

| | | Fairness | .03 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Fairness | Control | -.35 |
| | | Purity | -.03 |

## Multiple Comparisons – health care experiment

Bonferroni

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for health care | (J) experimental conditions for health care | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor universal health care | Control | Purity | .162 | .168 |
| | | Fairness | .162 | .006 |
| | Purity | Control | .162 | .168 |
| | | Fairness | .159 | .640 |
| | Fairness | Control | .162 | .006 |
| | | Purity | .159 | .640 |
| combined responses - no need for universal health care | Control | Purity | .164 | .420 |
| | | Fairness | .165 | .026 |
| | Purity | Control | .164 | .420 |
| | | Fairness | .161 | .701 |
| | Fairness | Control | .165 | .026 |
| | | Purity | .161 | .701 |
| combined responses - universal health care will solve US problems | Control | Purity | .173 | .214 |
| | | Fairness | .174 | .139 |
| | Purity | Control | .173 | .214 |
| | | Fairness | .170 | 1.000 |
| | Fairness | Control | .174 | .139 |
| | | Purity | .170 | 1.000 |

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for health care | (J) experimental conditions for health care | 95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound |
|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor universal health care | Control | Purity | -.08 |
| | | Fairness | .12 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Purity | Control | -.70 |
| | | Fairness | -.18 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.90 |
| | | Purity | -.58 |
| combined responses - no need for universal health care | Control | Purity | -.64 |
| | | Fairness | -.83 |
| | Purity | Control | -.15 |
| | | Fairness | -.58 |
| | Fairness | Control | .04 |
| | | Purity | -.20 |
| combined responses - universal health care will solve US problems | Control | Purity | -.10 |
| | | Fairness | -.07 |
| | Purity | Control | -.73 |
| | | Fairness | -.37 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.77 |
| | | Purity | -.44 |

| Dependent Variable | (I) experimental conditions for health care | (J) experimental conditions for health care | 95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound |
|---|---|---|---|
| combined responses - favor universal health care | Control | Purity | .70 |
| | | Fairness | .90 |
| | Purity | Control | .08 |
| | | Fairness | .58 |
| | Fairness | Control | -.12 |
| | | Purity | .18 |
| combined responses - no need for universal health care | Control | Purity | .15 |
| | | Fairness | -.04 |
| | Purity | Control | .64 |
| | | Fairness | .20 |
| | Fairness | Control | .83 |
| | | Purity | .58 |
| combined responses - universal health care will solve US problems | Control | Purity | .73 |
| | | Fairness | .77 |
| | Purity | Control | .10 |
| | | Fairness | .44 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fairness | Control | | .07 |
| | Purity | | .37 |

Based on observed means.

 The error term is Mean Square(Error) = 2.044.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

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