Authoritarian Personality, Partisan Media Selective Exposure and Gun Control

Attitudes: Evidence from ANES 2016 & 2020 Data

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Abstract

People with a strong authoritarian personality have high demand for safety. They are more likely to oppose gun control (Altemeyer, R. A., 1996). The authoritarian personality is strongly connected with conservative beliefs (Napier & Jost, 2008; Bakker et al., 2021), which I believe may lead to partisan media selective exposure. Although there is a bitter controversy over the effects of partisan media selective exposure, Levendusky (2013) believes that citizens store the summary attitude from the partisan media they watch to update their beliefs. After exposure to partisan media with different gun attitudes, people may store these attitudes, and express their support or opposition for gun control. Therefore, I propose that partisan media selective exposure serves as a mediator between the authoritarian personality and gun control attitudes. To test my hypotheses, this study uses ANES 2020 data (N=8,280). The findings of this study demonstrate that the authoritarian personality can exert an indirect effect on gun control attitudes through partisan media selective exposure. Based on classification of mediation models proposed by Zhao et al. (2010), the findings show that 1) With liberal-leaning media selective exposure as the mediator, the model is an indirect-only mediation model (full mediation). About 42 % of the effects of the authoritarian personality on gun control attitudes are mediated by liberal-leaning media selective exposure; 2) With conservative-leaning media selective exposure as the mediator, the model is a competitive mediation model (partial mediation), revealing that there may be some omitted mediators. About 22 % of the effects of the authoritarian personality on gun control attitudes are mediated by conservative-leaning media selective exposure. Surprisingly, ANES 2020 data shows that the authoritarian personality is negatively associated with conservative-

leaning media selective exposure, while the authoritarian personality is indeed negatively associated with liberal-leaning media selective exposure. What's more, over-time evidence from ANES 2016 & 2020 panel data (N=2,670) shows that 1) overall, conservative-leaning media selective exposure decreases respondents' gun control attitudes; 2) For both Democrats and Republicans, there is no significant evidence indicating that exposure to partisan media leads to their issue polarization. This research contributes to extending current literature. Firstly, I test that whether the authoritarian personality affects the behavior of partisan media choices. Secondly, this study constructs theoretical connections among political personality, partisan media selective exposure and specific policy preferences, by explaining the mechanism through which the authoritarian personality can affect gun control attitudes. At last, I explore the over-time effects of partisan media selective exposure on individuals, which helps understand the severe polarized political landscape in today's America. The limitation is that there is need to conduct a more targeted survey or experiment to explore the relationship between the authoritarian personality and political behaviors, partisan media use in particular. Secondly, other potential influencing factors (e.g., political engagement, education) should be considered in future study. Thirdly, there is need to include more policy issues (e.g., immigration, LGBTQ+, abortion) in future studies.

Keywords: the authoritarian personality, partisan media selective exposure, policy preferences, media effects

Introduction

On May 24, 2022, 21 lives including 19 children lost in the Uvalde school shooting. This tragedy again gives rise to a huge controversy over gun ownership in the United States. However, prior study shows that injuries and deaths caused by mass shooting may not induce changes in political attitudes. Americans didn't grant greater support for gun control after the Sandy Hook shooting (Rogowski & Tucker, 2019).

Apart from significant events, personality is also an important predictor of political attitudes (Bakker et al., 2021). In this study, I put emphasis on the authoritarian personality, which is believed to be strongly connected to conservative beliefs (Cizmar et al., 2014). Also, the authoritarian personality is believed to be closely connected with political behaviors (i.e., votes for party candidates). However, the relationship between the authoritarian personality and partisan media selective exposure, which may also affect gun control attitudes, has not been fully discussed. According to Xu and Peterson (2017), Big Five personality influences political orientations via media preferences. Their work preliminarily explores the role of media selective exposure between personality and political preferences. In the era of personality research, the authoritarian personality is also an important topic, besides Big Five personality. Therefore, the research objective of this study is to test whether partisan media selective exposure might mediate the relationship between the authoritarian personality and gun control attitudes. The results offer preliminary evidence for the hypotheses.

This research contributes to extending current literature. Firstly, I test that whether the authoritarian personality affects the behavior of partisan media choices. Secondly, I construct theoretical connections among political personality, partisan media selective exposure and

specific policy preferences, by explaining the mechanism through which the authoritarian personality can affect gun control attitudes. At last, I explore the over-time effects of partisan media selective exposure on individuals, which helps understand the severe polarized political landscape and the power of political elites in today's America.

Literature Review

The Authoritarian Personality and Political Orientations

Proposed by Adorno and his colleagues (1950), the authoritarian personality is depicted as a set of personality traits showing rigid repression and defense, conformity to authority and convention, eager for power and material benefits. Also, people with high authoritarian personality are sensitive to a threatening and dangerous environment. It's possible for them to have greater anxiety (Richey, 2017) and take more rigid measures to defend safety and security (Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). In that case, they are more likely to support gun freedom and oppose gun control (Altemeyer, R. A., 1996).

The authoritarian personality has been discussed continuously over the past 70 years, closely connecting with political orientations. Although there is evidence supporting left-wing authoritarianism (Eysenck, 1981; Conway III et al., 2018; Wronski et al., 2018), authoritarianism is generally believed to exist in the right-wing (Stone, 1980). Prior studies show that the authoritarian personality is strongly associated with conservative ideology and beliefs (Jost et al., 2008; Napier & Jost, 2008; Altemeyer, 1988; van Hiel et al., 2004; Nilsson & Jost, 2020). Lots of prior studies put emphasis on the relationship between the authoritarian personality and vote choices for the Republicans (Lane, 1955; Cizmar et al., 2014; Choma & Hanoch, 2017; Knuckey & Hassan, 2022). According to Cizmar et al. (2014), in 1992, 2000,

2004, 2008, the authoritarian personality is significantly positively associated with voting Republican for president. Acoording to Knuckey and Hassan (2022), the authoritarian personality is likely to remain a prediction factor of vote choice during the Trump era. However, in Luttig's work (2021), there is no significant effect of the authoritarian personality on support for President Trump over the course of the 2016 presidential election. Prior studies also provide evidence for the strong relationship between the authoritarian personality and conservative policy preferences (Cizmar et al., 2014; Hetherington & Weiler, 2009; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011). Cizmar and his colleagues (2014) find that the authoritarian personality is strongly connected with conservative attitudes on abortion and women's rights, opposition to increases in immigration, and support for the death penalty from 1992 to 2008. However, in their research, they do not specifically discuss gun problems. A recent example is the effects of the authoritarian personality on the COVID-19 pandemic health behaviors. During the pandemic, American conservatives who should have been more sensitive to risks, tend to ignore protective health behaviors, while American liberals tend to adopt more strict policies (e.g., wearing masks, taking vaccines). Ollerenshaw (2022) finds that the authoritarian personality conditionally affects Americans' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The authoritarian personality indeed promotes people's concern for risks of COVID-19, but only for people who are not engaged in politics. For those politically engaged Americans, their concern for COVID-19 is cut against. In his work, the measure of political engagement includes people's attention to news. This is another evidence that media exposure is an important impacting factor between the authoritarian personality and policy preferences.

Political media choice is one of political behaviors. However, there is still no fully discussion on the relationship between political personality and individual's initiative behavior of partisan media selective exposure. In this study, considering that people having the authoritarian personality have preferences for conservative beliefs, I have reasons to believe that they will have more exposure to conservative-leaning media, and less exposure to liberal-leaning media. Considering their need for safety and their potential policy preferences, I also believe that they are more likely to support gun freedom and oppose gun control.

Partisan Media Selective Exposure and Media Effects

Previous studies have shown that ideology, party identification (Stroud, 2008; Garrett, 2009; Garrett & Stroud, 2014) and cultural values (Newman et al., 2018) drive people's media choices. This study proposes that political personality can also be a predictor of people's selective exposure to partisan media.

Apart from discussion about the motivation of media selective exposure, there is a bitter controversy over the effects of partisan media selective exposure. Levendusky (2013) believes that citizens store the summary attitude from the partisan media they watch to update their beliefs. Also, when people receive the up-to-down information flow from political elites, they will experience social norms built by political elites (Entman & Usher, 2018; Brady et al., 2021). These social norms shape people's world view and sense of right and wrong, especially for those who already have party identities. Ollerenshaw's research (2022) explores why American conservatives show so many pandemic health behaviors opposite to what is predicted by their political personality. The conclusion is that their attention to political elite discourses. Therefore, we can imagine that selective exposure to liberal-leaning

media leads to rise in liberal beliefs, while selective exposure to conservative-leaning media leads to rise in conservative beliefs. In this study, I believe that people who have more exposure to liberal-leaning media may have stronger gun control attitudes, while people who have more exposure to conservative-leaning media may have weaker gun control attitudes.

What's more, in this study, I want to further explore the over-times effects of partisan media selective on individuals. Does partisan media selective exposure make people's gun attitudes more polarized? Can people's gun attitudes maintain a stable state for a long time?

Dilliplane (2014) believes that the seminal theory from Lazarsfeld and colleagues (1948) about activation, conversion and reinforcement can be extended to today's partisan media environment. In her research, she talked about how these three effects of partisan media selective exposure affect people's vote choices. Activation refers that undecided partisans shift their votes to their party's candidate after exposure to like-minded news. Reinforcement refers that people's vote preferences may be strengthened after exposure to like-minded news. Conversion refers that people shift their votes to the opposing party's candidate after exposure to counter-attitudinal news. It should be noted that the conversion effect doesn't mean exposure to like-minded media results in counter-attitude, but the effects of exposure to counter-attitudinal media exceed those of exposure to like-minded media.

The reinforcement effect can also be understood as polarization. Some researchers believe that exposure to partisan news doesn't foster polarization (Wojcieszak et al., 2021). They use web browsing data to measure partisan media selective exposure. They also admit the lack of mobile data and real-life time use data. Watch partisan media on TV and reading political news through mobile devices are also important ways for people to make media

choices. Most other researchers believe the effects of partisan media on polarization do exist. Stroud (2010) finds that partisan media selective exposure leads to polarization using observational data. Levendusky (2013) uses experimental studies to prove that partisan media can polarize viewers, making extreme individuals more extreme.

Measures of polarization vary from affective polarization to ideology polarization, to vote preferences, to policy preferences. Although these concepts are inseparable, there is still a need for disentangling one from another (Dias & Lelkes, 2022). For specific policy preferences, Hmielowski et al. (2020) find that the increases in use of conservative media are subsequently associated with conservative beliefs regarding immigration, law enforcement and gun control. There are another some studies testing the effects of media selective exposure on specific policies preferences (e.g., immigration, foreign policy, gun policy, LGT equality) (Héricourt & Spielvogel, 2014; Gadarian, 2010; Dowler, 2002; Kantack & Paschall, 2020; Lee & Hicks, 2021). However, these studies do not distinguish partisan media. Hence, the effects of partisan media selective exposure on specific policy preferences have not been fully discussed right now. In this study, I choose gun control attitudes as research object. I also hope to explore other policy issues in future work.

To sum up, firstly, I propose a mediation model: Partisan media selective exposure serves as a mediator between the authoritarian personality and gun control attitudes (Figure 1). I hypothesize that:

H1: The authoritarian personality will reduce gun control attitudes via less selective exposure to liberal-leaning media.

H_2: The authoritarian personality will reduce gun control attitudes via more selective exposure to conservative-leaning media.

Figure 1

The Mediation Models
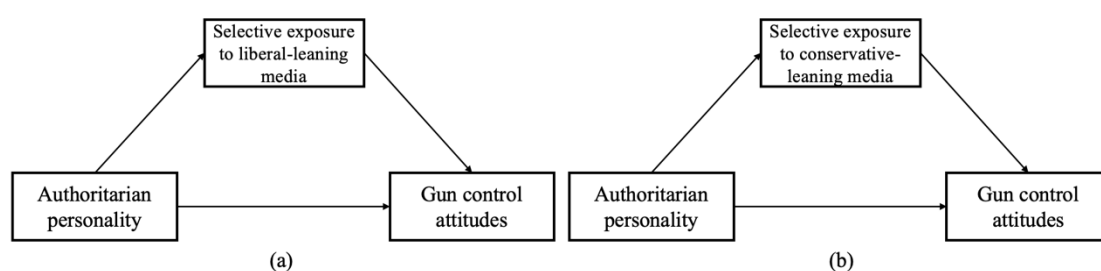
Secondly, I use the panel data from ANES 2016 & ANES 2020 to test the over-time effects of partisan media selective exposure on the same group of respondents. I propose the research questions that:

RQ_1: Based on the activation, conversion and reinforcement effect, what effects do changes of the panel data respondents' selective exposure to partisan media have on their gun control attitudes?

RQ_2: What's the difference between Democrats and Republicans?

Method

Data

This study uses the American National Election Studies (ANES 2016 & 2020) time series dataset. To test H_1 and H_2, I use the whole data set of ANES 2020 (N=8,280). For RQ_1 and RQ_2, I use the ANES 2016-2020 panel data (N=2,670).

Measures

The Authoritarian Personality

Independent variable is measured by "parenting values" (Cizmar et al., 2014; Lizotte, 2019). The measurement is widely used in literature of Authoritarianism and studies using ANES data. ANES use four items to ask respondents about their parenting orientations. The nonauthoritarian choices (independence, curiosity, self-reliance and considerate) are codes as 0. The authoritarian choices (respect for elders, good manners, obedience, and well-behaved) are codes as 1. The choice "both" is codes as 0.5. The mean of responses on four items is used as the degree of authoritarian personality.

Gun Control Attitudes (Anti-Gun)

Dependent variable refers to the extent to which the respondent supports the gun control policies. In Lizotte (2019)'study, she thought that ANES only use one single item to measure gun control attitudes. However, from my point of view, there is another item also measuring gun control attitudes: How important is gun access issue to you personally? If one person thinks gun access is important, then his/her gun control attitude is weak; otherwise, his/her gun control attitude is strong. Hence, to measure gun control attitudes from 2016 ANES respondents, I use two items. In 2020 ANES, there are another three items asking respondents about their attitudes towards rifles. So, I use five items to measure gun control attitudes from 2020 ANES respondents. I recode the responses and take the mean of the responses as the dependent variable. The degree of gun control attitudes varies from 1 to 7 with high degree meaning stronger gun control attitudes.

Liberal-Leaning Media Selective Exposure (Lib_Media) and Conservative-Leaning Media

Selective Exposure (Con_Media)

I calculate the number of liberal-leaning media and conservative-leaning media that a respondent used as the mediator variables. ANES respondents were asked that "Which of the following TV programs/ radio programs/ website/ printed newspaper/ online newspaper do you read regularly". First, I exclude non-English (Spanish) media, local newspaper and TV entertainment programs (i.e., TV series and reality TV show). Secondly, according to prior studies (Song, 2017; Lu & Lee, 2019; Morris & Morris, 2022) and professional media bias rating agency (https://adfontesmedia.com), I classify all media into liberal-leaning media, conservative-leaning media, and moderate media, to identify the partisan media selective exposure of each respondent. Based on my classification, ANES 2020 provides 26 liberal-leaning media options and 21 conservative-leaning media options, while ANES 2016 provides 25 liberal-leaning media options and 15 conservative-leaning media options.

Table 1

Classification of Liberal-leaning Media and Conservative-leaning Media (2016&2020)

Liberal-leaning media	Conservative-leaning media
The Late Show with Stephen Colbert	Hannity
The Rachel Maddow Show	Tucker Carlson Tonight
The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell	The Five
The Lead with Jake Tapper	The Ingraham Angle
Anderson Cooper 360	The Story with Martha MacCallum
Cuomo Prime Time	Special Report with Bret Baier
Erin Burnett OutFront	Fox & Friends
60 Minutes	Rush Limbaugh
Meet the Press	The Sean Hannity Show
Morning Joe	The Dave Ramsey Show

All In with Chris Hayes

The 11th Hour with Brian Williams

All Things Considered

The Thom Hartmann Program

yahoo.com

CNN.com

huffingtonpost.com

New York Times (website)

Washington Post (website)

The Guardian (theguardian.com)

buzzfeed.com

nbcnews.com

washingtonpost.com (online newspaper)

nytimes.com (online newspaper)

The Washington Post (printed newspaper)

The New York Times (printed newspaper)

Jimmy Kimmel Live

The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore

Hardball with Chris Matthews

Good Morning America

Erin Burnett OutFront

The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon

The Mark Levin Show

The Glenn Beck Program

The Mike Gallagher Show

The Hugh Hewitt Show

The Savage Nation

The Dana Show

breitbart.com

foxnews.com

dailycaller.com

online.wsj.com

The Wall Street Journal (printed newspaper)

The Kelly File

On the Record with Greta Van Susteren

The O'Reilly Factor

The Mark Levin Show

The Schnitt Show

Control Variables

I choose sex, age, education, total family income, race, region, political ideology, party identification, the number of guns that the respondent owns and egalitarianism as control variables. Sex is coded 1 for man and 0 for woman. Education is coded 1 for B.A. or above, and 0 otherwise. Income is coded 1 for $50,000 or above, and 0 otherwise. Race is coded 1 for White and 0 otherwise. Region is coded 1 for south and 0 otherwise. Political ideology is measured from 1= extremely liberal to 7 = extremely conservative. Party identification is also measured from 1 = strong democrat to 7 = strong republican. Egalitarianism is measured by the mean of three items about egalitarianism.

Analysis

I use Stata 17 to do all the analysis. Firstly, I fit structural equation modeling (SEM) models. Secondly, I use the medsem package (Mehmetoglu, 2018) in Stata to test the mediation hypothesis. The medsem package tests mediation models according to classification of mediation models proposed by Zhao et al. (2010). In his work, Zhao et al. (2010) extends the previous single standard for judging the establishment of mediation effect. He proposes three types of mediation, including complementary mediation, competitive mediation, and indirect-only mediation.

Results

Mediation Analysis

To test the meditational pathway between authoritarianism and gun control attitude with liberal-leaning media use as the mediator, I fit a structural equation modeling (SEM) model (Model 1), with liberal-leaning media use as the mediator and all control variables included (see Table 2).

Table 2

SEM Model with Liberal-leaning Media Selective Exposure as a Mediator

	Model 1 (N = 5,676)	
	Lib_media	Anti-gun
Lib_media		.030***
		(.005)
Authoritarian Personality	-1.121***	-.047
	(.118)	(.046)
Male	.144*	-.279***
	(.068)	(.027)
Age	.004	.010***

	Model 1 (N = 5,676)	
	Lib_media	Anti-gun
	(.002)	(.001)
Edu	.545***	.149***
	(.073)	(.029)
Income	.270**	.134***
	(.079)	(.031)
Married	.081	-.027
	(.074)	(.029)
White	-.031	-.016
	(.085)	(.033)
South	.164*	-.086**
	(.072)	(.028)
Ideology	-.260***	-.182***
	(.033)	(.013)
Party Identification	-.284***	-.115***
	(.023)	(.009)
Guns owned	.008	-.045***
	(.009)	(.003)
Egalitarianism	.130	.238***
	(.068)	(.026)
Constant	3.420***	4.666***
	(.303)	(.119)

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

The result of the mediation analysis shows that the mediation model between authoritarian personality and gun control attitudes with liberal-leaning media selective exposure as a mediator is an indirect-only mediation. Liberal-leaning media selective exposure fully mediates the relationship between the authoritarian personality and gun control attitudes (Monte Carlo tests: $\beta= -.034$, p < .001, 95% CI: $-.048$, $-.022$). About 42 % of the effects of the authoritarian personality on gun control attitudes are mediated by liberal-leaning media selective exposure. Therefore, H$_1$ is supported.

To test the meditational pathway between authoritarianism and gun control attitude with conservative-leaning media use as the mediator, I too fit a structural equation modeling (SEM) model (Model 2), with conservative-leaning media use as the mediator and all control variables included (see Table 3).

Table 3

SEM Model with Conservative-leaning Media Selective Exposure as a Mediator

	Model 2 (N = 5,676)	
	Con_media	Anti-gun
Con_media		-.115***
		(.009)
Authoritarian Personality	-.153*	-.099*
	(.068)	(.045)
Male	.187***	-.253***
	(.040)	(.026)
Age	.009***	.011***
	(.001)	(.001)
Edu	.172***	.185***
	(.042)	(.028)
Income	.088	.153***
	(.046)	(.030)
Married	.005	-.024
	(.043)	(.028)
White	-.009	-.018
	(.049)	(.032)
South	.017	-.079**
	(.041)	(.027)
Ideology	.245***	-.162***
	(.019)	(.013)
Party Identification	.130***	-.109***
	(.013)	(.009)
Guns owned	.012*	-.044***
	(.005)	(.003)
Egalitarianism	-.079*	.232***
	(.039)	(.026)
Constant	-1.025***	4.652***

Model 2	
(N = 5,676)	
Con_media	Anti-gun
(.176)	(.117)

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

The result of the mediation analysis shows that the mediation model between

authoritarian personality and gun control attitudes with conservative-leaning media selective

exposure as a mediator is a competitive mediation. Conservative-leaning media selective

exposure partially mediates the relationship between the authoritarian personality and gun

control attitudes (Monte Carlo tests: β= .018, p < .05, 95% CI: .003, .034). About 22 % of the

effects of the authoritarian personality on gun control attitudes are mediated by conservative-

leaning selective exposure. In my hypotheses, the authoritarian personality is positively

associated with conservative-leaning media selective exposure. People with higher

authoritarian personality tend to watch more news from conservative-leaning media.

However, Surprisingly, using ANES 2020 data, Model 2 shows that the authoritarian

personality is negatively associated with conservative-leaning media selective exposure.

Therefore, H$_2$ is partially supported. According to Zhao et al. (2010), although there is a

mediation effect of the mediator, there are some competitive factors being omitted. The

effects of those competitive factors may offset those of the mediator, conservative-leaning

media selective exposure here.

Robustness Check

Since the above analysis is testing mediation through fitting SEM models, I further

conduct mediation analysis using the BruceR package (Bao, 2021) in R. The BruceR package

uses the models of Haye's PROCESS (Hayes, 2022) to conduct mediation and moderation analysis. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4

Mediation analysis using Haye's PROCESS Model 4

	Anti-gun	Lib_media	Con_media	Anti-gun
Authoritarian Personality	-0.082	-1.121***	-0.153*	-0.049
	(0.046)	(0.118)	(0.069)	(0.045)
Lib_media				0.047***
				(0.005)
Con_media				-0.132***
				(0.009)
Male	-0.274***	0.144*	0.187***	-0.256***
	(0.027)	(0.068)	(0.040)	(0.026)
Age	0.010***	0.004	0.009***	0.011***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Edu	0.166***	0.545***	0.172***	0.163***
	(0.029)	(0.073)	(0.042)	(0.028)
Income	0.143***	0.270***	0.088	0.142***
	(0.031)	(0.079)	(0.046)	(0.030)
Marriage	-0.025	0.081	0.005	-0.028
	(0.029)	(0.074)	(0.043)	(0.028)
White	-0.017	-0.031	-0.009	-0.017
	(0.033)	(0.085)	(0.049)	(0.032)
South	-0.081**	0.164*	0.017	-0.087**
	(0.028)	(0.072)	(0.042)	(0.027)
Ideology	-0.190***	-0.260***	0.245***	(0.027)
	(0.013)	(0.033)	(0.019)	(0.013)
Party Identification	-0.124***	-0.284***	0.130***	-0.094***
	(0.009)	(0.023)	(0.013)	(0.009)
Guns owned	-0.045***	0.008	0.012*	-0.044***
	(0.003)	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Egalitarianism	0.242***	0.130	-0.079*	0.225***
	(0.026)	(0.068)	(0.039)	(0.026)
Intercept	4.799***	2.097***	0.802***	4.799***

	(0.013)	(0.034)	(0.020)	(0.013)
R2	0.365	0.210	0.192	0.392
Adj. R2	0.363	0.209	0.190	0.391
N	5676	5676	5676	5676

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

The results show that although both the total effects (c) and the direct effects (c') are insignificant, the indirect effects (ab) of two paths are significant, which reveals that the authoritarian personality can exert an indirect effect on gun control attitudes through partisan media selective exposure. The results also show that high authoritarian personality doesn't predict more selective exposure to conservative-leaning media. Actually, high authoritarian personality predicts both less selective exposure to conservative-leaning media and less selective exposure to liberal-leaning media.

Panel Data Analysis

To answer the research question, I use ANES 2016 & ANES 2020 panel data. Through F-tests, I fit a fixed effects model for the general-level respondents (N = 2163), a pooled OLS regression model for the respondents who identified themselves Democrat in both waves (N = 1,098), and a fixed effects model for the respondents who identified themselves Republican in both waves (N = 756). The panel data gives us over-time evidence from the same group of people, which helps examine variation within respondents. Table 5 shows the results of the fixed effects regression.

Table 5

Panel Data Analysis

	Model 1 Fixed effects	Model 2 Pooled OLS	Model 3 Fixed effects
	All (N = 2,163)	Democrats (N = 1,098)	Republicans (N = 756)
	Anti-gun	Anti-gun	Anti-gun
Lib_media	-.033	.008	.010
	(.023)	(.009)	(.047)
Con_media	-.112*	-.059	-.124*
	(.049)	(.042)	(.057)
Male	.647	-.061	1.945*
	(.423)	(.052)	(.861)
Age	.039***	.006***	.024
	(.007)	(.002)	(.015)
Education	-.204	.153**	.014
	(.235)	(.055)	(.363)
Married	-.047	.067	-.215
	(.226)	(.053)	(.348)
White	-.145	.047	-.706
	(.253)	(.058)	(.370)
South	.048	-.043	.256
	(.559)	(.055)	(.585)
Ideology	-.040	-.118***	.095
	(.061)	(.023)	(.105)
Party identification	-.059	-	-
	(.050)		
Guns owned	.008	-.027***	.001
	(.013)	(.008)	(.013)
Egalitarianism	.013	.069	-.061
	(.094)	(.059)	(.130)
Constant	3.054***	4.935***	2.102
	(.711)	(.259)	(1.436)
Within R^2	.1118	-	.1152
Between R^2	.0193	-	.0085
Overall R^2	.0212	-	.0049
R^2	-	0.0859	-
Adjusted R^2	-	0.0767	-
Prob > F	0.0000	0.0000	0.1062

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

Note. I did not control the variable Income, because income was measured differently in

ANES 2016 and ANES 2020.

The results show that, overall, conservative-leaning media selective exposure decrease respondents' gun control attitudes over time (β= −.112, p < .05). For the Democrats, there is no significant evidence show that exposure to partisan media have over-time effects on them. For the Republicans, there is also no significant evidence show that exposure to partisan media have over-time effects on them, because the F-test of the fixed effects model is not significant.

Discussion

Conclusion

This study preliminarily proves the establishment of the mediation effects of partisan media selective exposure on the relationship between the authoritarian personality and gun control attitudes. By using ANES data and conducting statistical analysis, this study also measures the effects of the mediation. About 42 % of the effects of the authoritarian personality on gun control attitudes are mediated by liberal-leaning media selective exposure, while about 22 % of the effects of the authoritarian personality on gun control attitudes are mediated by conservative-leaning media selective exposure. The result shows that liberal-leaning media selective exposure as the mediator has more power over mediation than conservative-leaning media selective exposure.

This study also offers over-time evidence for the effects of partisan media exposure on individuals' gun control attitudes. The results show that conservative-leaning media seems to be more influential and more powerful between 2016-2020. This is also the time period when Trump, the 45th president of the United States, was in office.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. Firstly, according to literature review and hypotheses, the authoritarian personality is positively associated with conservative-leaning media selective exposure. However, this study doesn't find the evidence. This may because the data I use. Firstly, the sample of ANES data may be not enough. Secondly, based on the ANES itself, the measurement of partisan media selective exposure here is measuring the numbers of partisan media one respondent uses, instead of the overall time one respondent spends on partisan media. Although prior studies also measure partisan media selective exposure by identify media types or media bias, there is still need to consider measuring time spent on partisan media in future study.

Secondly, although this study provides preliminary evidence for the relationships among the authoritarian personality, partisan media selective exposure, and gun control attitudes. According to the results, the mechanism between the two different mediation models, indirect-only mediation and competitive mediation, still need to be explained. There may be some important factors being ignored (e.g., political engagement, education). Therefore, a more targeted survey or experiment to explore the relationship between authoritarian personality and political behavior, partisan media use in particular, is welcomed. Attitudes towards other polarized issues (e.g., LGBTQ+, same-sex marriage, global warming, abortion) should also be tested in the mediation model.

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