Hatred Takes An Ideologue

Recognizable Belief Patterns Lead to More Animosity and Disagreement

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This version: January 19, 2025

Abstract

An expanding body of evidence indicates that substantive disagreement fuels political animosity. However, pundits often use terms like 'ideological disagreement' to describe a broad range of phenomena, diverging from how the concept is understood in classical Conversian literature on beliefs and their structures. This literature suggests that individuals do not uniformly hold or organize their opinions. Building on this foundation, I argue for a critical distinction between disagreements among ideologues—who are opinionated and aligned in their beliefs—and disagreements among others. I hypothesize that disagreements among ideologues result in higher expected disagreement and greater mutual animosity. To test this hypothesis, I conducted two survey experiments with representative U.S. samples (N = 2,000 each, in January 2024 and May 2024). Using evaluations of hypothetical profiles of fellow citizens, I demonstrate that opinionatedness and ideological alignment of beliefs significantly reduce interpersonal affinity in contexts of disagreement. In the first study, disagreements with centrists elicit nearly four times less animosity than disagreements with opinionated counterparts. Furthermore, ideological alignment generates almost three times more intense negative feelings at equivalent levels of substantive disagreement. In the second study, I find that ideologically aligned individuals anticipate higher levels of disagreement with one another compared to non-ideologues, when they observe the same level of disagreement as them. This effect is particularly pronounced among ideologues capable of recognizing ideological patterns in others' beliefs. These findings highlight the role of opinionatedness and recognizable belief structures, offering a new approach that is generalizable to other divided democracies.

Keywords: ideological disagreement, policy disagreement, animosity, polarization

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Levels of animosity in the American public have reached unprecedented levels (Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015), with no indications of improvement in the near future. On the contrary, evidence suggests that these changes are self-reinforcing, leading to increasing levels of polarization (Hobolt, Lawall, and Tilley 2023). Concurrently, various social groups are becoming more homogeneous, experiencing heightened anger and perceived threats from incongruent candidates and policies (Mason 2016; DellaPosta 2020). Finally, this trend is not limited to attitudes; political behavior across various domains has also become rife with hostility, particularly in online environments (Lelkes, Sood, and Iyengar 2017).

When explaining this phenomenon, significant attention has been given to animosity between partisans—affective polarization—both in the United States (Iyengar and Westwood 2015) and elsewhere (Wagner 2024). Partisan identities have been emphasized as an important source of the growing divide, particularly as an explanation for the increasing mutual animosity among partisans (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012). This study, however, focuses on different sources of animosity beyond partisan identity. The reasons are twofold. First, many researchers highlight the substantive basis of interpersonal affect in the extent of disagreements on public policies (Orr and Huber 2020; Orr, Fowler, and Huber 2023; Algara and Zur 2023). When individuals decide about their feelings toward someone, policy views influence this calculus, even when partisan identity is known. Second, there is an important cross-cutting distinction that shapes the animosity of both partisans and independents alike (Krupnikov and Ryan 2022). This 'other divide' transcends partisan groups and differentiates between those who actively engage in political conflicts and less-involved bystanders, who often lack significant attachments to their in-party. Their feelings of animosity, rather than stemming from partisan identity, originate from disenchantment with certain party elites (Klar and Krupnikov 2016).

Although these and other studies suggest that affect is rooted in disagreement within a small part of the population, the precise nature of disagreement is often obscured in these studies. Specifically, the role of ideology is frequently neglected or insufficiently conceptualized. There are multiple reasons to worry about ideology as a factor facilitating hatred. While the political views of the American populace have not become polarized as a whole (Lelkes 2016), the perspectives of ideologues have notably diverged (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008). Ideologues are also particularly prone to misconceptions about the opposing party, and people dislike talking to them (Homola et al. 2023). Despite this, we have yet to understand if the disagreement among ideologues produces hatred beyond the effect of non-ideological substantive disagreement. This raises questions: *Does disagreement impact relationships differently when happening among ideologically aligned individuals? And how much does opinionatedness matter for disagreement?*

This paper asserts that in discussing the roots of animosity stemming from substantive disagreements, it is crucial to differentiate between ideological and non-ideological conflicts. The mass population comprises a mix of ideologically inconsistent moderates as well as principled ideologues (Fowler et al. 2022; Broockman and Lauderdale 2024). In this manuscript, I build on the classical Conversian notion of ideology as a system of explicit and unequivocal political beliefs (Converse 1964) and introduce two new aspects of ideology into the debate on substantive sources of animosity. First, I consider the difference in disagreement with opinionated versus centrist counterparts.

Second, I focus on how the ideological alignment of beliefs between interlocutors alters the nature of disagreement.

Using two survey experiments (N = 2000 each, conducted in January and May 2024), I find that disagreement with an opinionated counterpart results in more animosity than disagreement with a centrist. Furthermore, I show that ideological alignment exacerbates animosity toward different-minded counterparts, compared to the same disagreement between people with unstructured beliefs. In the second study, I show that the ability to predict unobserved beliefs play an important role, since ideologues expect to disagree much more with each other at otherwise identical levels of disagreement. This is especially true for those who recognize ideological structures in beliefs of others. These findings highlight the important distinction between ideological and non-ideological disagreement when it comes to political animosity.

These results suggest a previously undescribed mechanism. The degree to which a person's beliefs are constrained into an ideological structure and made explicit impacts our ability to predict disagreement on unobserved attitudes and respond with elevated levels of dislike. When people are ideologically constrained and sufficiently knowledgeable about ideologies, they do not need to know many attitudes to dislike each other, as they can easily predict the beliefs they have not yet observed. This effect may extend to other democracies, provided there are sufficient levels of belief alignment, i.e. that individuals take clear stances, and organize their beliefs into recognizable structures.

The Role of Ideology in Animosity and Disagreement

Exploring the substantive roots of partisan animosity involves navigating through a maze of closely linked concepts, such as *policy disagreement*, *ideological disagreement*, or *belief alignment*. Additionally, some also distinguish between *belief content* and *belief structures*. In a short review, I describe how researchers approached this and why we need a new approach that considers the role of ideology more thoroughly. I will point out the missing elements within the current conceptual framework, setting the stage for a proposed method to address these gaps.

Research on the connection between policy disagreements and animosity branches into two main paths. The first path attempts to separate the substantive aspects of disagreement from conflicts tied to identity (Orr and Huber 2020; Dias and Lelkes 2022; Orr, Fowler, and Huber 2023), often by focusing on a single policy attitude chosen at random to represent policy disagreement. This is a good strategy when addressing the conundrum of policy over identity as a source of animosity. However, to fully grasp the nuances of policy disagreement, it is crucial to consider individuals' comprehensive belief systems. It may seem that as opinions have become more closely aligned with partisanship (Levendusky 2010; Baldassarri and Gelman 2008), adding more beliefs provides little extra insight. However, this overlooks the diversity in ideological thinking among both partisan and non-partisan groups (Klar 2014). For example, Klar and Krupnikov (2016) demonstrate that individuals who identify as Independents often align their beliefs with one of the two parties, indicating the presence of ideological thinking even among non-partisans. Although disentangling identity and belief incongruence is not the main aim here, at the heart of this research

is the very same question I strive to answer: What portion of animosity can be attributed to substantive disagreement, and how much stems from other factors?

The second research avenue initiates the investigation with the premise that individuals harbor a multitude of beliefs. Because we are talking about disagreement on more than one belief, scholars often use the term ideological disagreement. Such disagreement could be analyzed when the experimenter presents the subject as holding multiple issues simultaneously or observationally looks for belief incongruence on many issues (Bougher 2017; Webster and Abramowitz 2017; Lelkes 2021; Homola et al. 2023). Other times, researchers seek ideological thinking among survey respondents and how it affects their feelings about their own group and the 'other side' (Homola et al. 2023; Turner-Zwinkels et al. 2023), identifying divergent ideologies as a key factor in animosity, both domestically and in a comparative international context.

Although termed differently, ideological disagreement essentially reflects a broader scope of policy disagreement, with the main distinction being the narrative of the study. Ideological disagreement, in this context, indicates a comprehensive disagreement on a wide range of policies. I argue that we should study ideology as another variable factoring in substantive disagreement sources of animosity. To do that, we should take a step back and consider some canonical accounts of ideology. When taken seriously, they provide surprising implications for studying the role of ideology in substantive disagreement and animosity. First, they help to understand the difference between ideological and non-ideological disagreement. Second, they go even further and shed light on the two dimensions of ideology: a) having beliefs aligned along the major dividing conflict line and b) even having solid opinions on political issues.

Many studies conceptualize ideology as a form of belief alignment, using simple ideological scales to map positions (Rogowski and Sutherland 2016; van Erkel and Turkenburg 2022; Algara and Zur 2023), or by predefining the content of these scales and assessing the coherence of beliefs within a singular ideological dimension (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Webster and Abramowitz 2017; Bougher 2017; Homola et al. 2023). The inherent understanding of ideology differs in these studies but corresponds to the notion of ideology as knowing 'what goes with what,' transcending mere logical consistency (Converse 1964; Jewitt and Goren 2016) and corresponding to a more informed organization of beliefs.[1]

However, it is evident that not all individuals have cohesive belief systems. There are more than two major types of belief systems and one dimension of conflict. Beyond the primary liberal-conservative dichotomy, the mass population exhibits a variety of belief structures (Fowler et al. 2022), including multiple alternative belief configurations (Broockman and Lauderdale 2024) that form reasonable structures of clear opinions rather than random assortments and noise in measurement (Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014). Recent research reassures us of the multidimensional nature of public opinion, demonstrating that policy disagreements are not random but adhere to a discernible number of intelligible policy domains (Hare, Highton, and Jones 2024), a phenomenon

1. Note that the term 'ideology' throughout this manuscript is used in the Conversian sense, referring to a system of beliefs that are sufficiently coherent and structured to be understood as such. This is not the only interpretation of ideology, as the term itself can be considered an essentially contested concept. It is important to distinguish its use here from other dimensions, such as closed-mindedness and affect, as outlined by Sartori (1969). Although Converse (1964) himself sought to avoid the ambiguous term 'ideology,' preferring the more analytical term 'belief system,' subsequent literature has frequently employed 'ideology,' and this study follows that convention.

observed not only in the United States but also across Europe, with public opinion foldable into three to five dimensions, depending on a country (Van Noord et al. 2024).

Following the debate inspired by Converse, there is another consideration largely missing from the current literature. To qualify as an ideologue, one must first possess stable and consistent views on public policies, a relative rarity according to studies asking about political opinions repeatedly (Freeder, Lenz, and Turney 2019). Similar instability, not attributable to survey design flaws, is noted in Swiss public opinion where only 20 to 40% of respondents hold stable attitudes (Hill and Kriesi 2001). Moreover, a significant portion of the electorate maintains centrist views (Fowler et al. 2022), often reflecting ambivalence towards specific policies that manifests as moderation (Zaller 1992). Therefore, there are theoretical reasons to include middle-of-the-road options in attitudinal scales when measuring policy disagreement and operational ideology (Broockman and Lauderdale 2024). Various approaches to ideology and disagreement are summarized in Table 1.

Approach to Ideology	**Studies**
Single issues	Orr and Huber (2020), Dias and Lelkes (2022), and Orr, Fowler, and Huber (2023)
Operational ideologies	
a) Predefined	Bougher (2017), Lelkes (2021), and Homola et al. (2023)
b) Data-driven	Baldassarri and Gelman (2008), Baldassarri and Goldberg (2014), Webster and Abramowitz (2017), DellaPosta (2020), Turner-Zwinkels et al. (2023), and Van Noord et al. (2024)
Ideological identities	Rogowski and Sutherland (2016), Webster and Abramowitz (2017), van Erkel and Turkenburg (2022), and Algara and Zur (2023)

Table 1: Review of Literature on Policy Disagreement

Ideologues: Beliefs and Their Structures

A key theoretical contribution of this study lies in the distinction between ideological and non-ideological policy disagreements. In the seminal work on beliefs by Converse (1964), ideologues can be contrasted with two groups of people. The first group consists of individuals who, unlike ideologues, do not form beliefs on political issues, or whose preferences are merely an expression of immediate group interests. The second group includes individuals who might hold some political stances but do not conceptualize them within the framework of more comprehensive ideologies, and whose beliefs lack internal structure. Here, I refer to the first element—taking a stance on a political issue—as *opinionatedness*, and I use *belief alignment* to describe the organization of beliefs around larger ideologies.

Opinionatedness, as mentioned in the previous section, varies in the population. While few individuals may hold no stable opinions altogether, many remain ambivalent, at least on some issues high on the political agenda (Fowler et al. 2022). This study's vantage point is that centrist responses, often observed in surveys (e.g., 'neither agree nor disagree'), undermine the principle

of comprehensive worldviews, a defining feature of ideologues. This approach moves beyond the notion that ideologues lack moderation. If the functional interdependence of beliefs (Converse 1964) is taken as the defining feature of an ideologue, centrism contradicts this principle. Centrist positions often do not stem from coherent ideological frameworks or foundational ideas about how society should be organized or governed; instead, they frequently reflect mere ambivalence on issues (Zaller 1992).

Distinguishing true attitudes has proved notoriously difficult (Zaller 1992). Here, I adopt a simplified approach, treating all centrist responses as counter to ideology, due to feasibility considerations in an experimental survey setting. Given the problematic ties to survey satisficing, I also prefer this approach over the inclusion of 'don't know' options on opinion scales (Krosnick et al. 2001; Wang and Krosnick 2020). This method does not distinguish between genuinely centrist attitudes and those of politically disengaged individuals (Mulligan 2013)—a distinction with some political implications (Fowler et al. 2022). Nevertheless, it suffices for delineating the presence or absence of ideological thinking.

The second element is belief alignment. Belief alignment refers to the structural coherence within an individual's belief network. For analytical purposes, researchers might choose to define what constitutes a coherent ideological framework or, alternatively, explore the relational dynamics between various attitudes without presupposing a specific structure. This latter approach is particularly apt for exploratory studies or for comparing belief structures for respondents and particular groups (see Turner-Zwinkels et al. 2023; Van Noord et al. 2024), while the former is preferable in cases when it is theoretically justified. In the particular context of the United States, the liberal-conservative continuum significantly shapes public opinion, positioning just two dominant ideologies at the forefront of the political space (Hare 2022). This dichotomy not only shapes the national discourse but also intensifies the visibility and influence of these ideological perspectives, making them central to political debates and, therefore, recognizable.

Focus on the two ideologies allows me to distinguish between disagreements that occur along the principal ideological axis (between liberals and conservatives) and those among individuals with alternative belief organizations who might also hold divergent views. Individuals in the latter category possess coherent beliefs, though structured differently from the majority, rendering them non-ideologues in the conventional sense (Converse 1964), as illustrated in Table 2, *Example B*. In the previous literature, this group was also referred to as 'Alternatives' (Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014) or, in reference to the Converse's foundational observation of the prevalence of unorganized belief systems in the mass population, 'Conversians' (Fowler et al. 2022). This is a non-negligible share of the population, with new indications that these groups might be even larger in magnitude than previously observed (Broockman and Lauderdale 2024).

	Ideologues	Others	
	(A) Liberal ideologue	(B) Less Aligned	(C) Less Opinionated
Political issue 1	Liberal attitude	Liberal attitude	Liberal attitude
Political issue 2	Liberal attitude	Liberal attitude	Centrism
Political issue 3	Liberal attitude	Conservative attitude	Liberal attitude
Political issue 4	Liberal attitude	Conservative attitude	Liberal attitude
Political issue 5	Liberal attitude	Liberal attitude	Centrism

Table 2: Examples with Varying Levels of Ideology

The objective of this study, however, extends beyond merely defining ideology; it seeks to understand how ideology influences affective responses in the face of strong policy disagreements. Such disagreements occur when a respondent and their hypothetical counterpart hold opposing views on a political matter (Orr and Huber 2020). In the context of many issues, it could be grasped as the number of issues on which people disagree. When it comes to centrist positions, if the evaluated counterpart does not have a directed opinion, it creates a different, weaker, type of disagreement.

Animosity Between Disagreeing Ideologues and Others

Opinionatedness and Disagreement

Given the ideological and non-ideological nature of one's beliefs, there may be more than one type of disagreement on public policies. As emphasized before, a significant portion of the electorate holds non-directed centrist beliefs on a considerable number of issues (Freeder, Lenz, and Turney 2019; Fowler et al. 2022). Indeed, when asked open-ended questions, most people exhibit inherently conflicted reasoning, being aware of arguments both for and against a policy (Feldman and Zaller 1992).

The prevalence of centrism, initially linked to a lack of political knowledge and sophistication in early literature (Converse 1964), has been interpreted in more recent studies as reflecting non-random genuine beliefs on political issues (Hill and Kriesi 2001; Hare, Highton, and Jones 2024). Instead of representing unstructured random variation, these issues, where people seem conflicted, do not indicate a lack of information or attentiveness but rather a form of moderation on the respondent's part. When conflicted, people tend to 'split the difference' and adopt middle-of-the-road positions on public policy (Mulligan 2013).

This, however, raises an essential question: *Is the disagreement with a centrist counterpart equivalent to the disagreement in the case of an actual policy divergence? And if not, how does the impact of the two types of disagreement on political animosity differ?* To better illustrate the motivation behind this question, consider the following scenario:

Counterfactual Scenario 1. *Imagine an ideologue encountering someone with whom she disagrees on any policy. This could happen with two different people. It could be a different-minded ideologue (mismatch due to opinionatedness and opposite stances), but it could also be a moderate who is not certain about her positions (mismatch due to the counterpart's lack of directed political beliefs). These two situations may not be equivalent in their resulting disagreement and animosity.*

Studies focusing on disagreement on individual policies often overlook this distinction. For instance, Orr and Huber (2020) code all instances where the subject's views are not congruent with the vignette as disagreement. Similarly, Dias and Lelkes (2022) conceptualize disagreement as a policy mismatch, thus conflating these two different kinds of disagreement and putting both of them into the same category.

In this study, I differentiate two types of disagreement, which I label 'strong disagreement' and 'weak disagreement.' The presence of strong disagreement hinges on whether the other person holds any opinion or interest in the subject matter. Weak disagreement arises when the subject is exposed to a centrist counterpart, whereas strong disagreement occurs only in the case of opinion divergence. This distinction highlights the double meaning of the policy mismatch situation, which cannot simply be interpreted as equivalent in both cases.

H1: *Disagreement involving a Centrist results in less animosity than disagreement between opinionated counterparts.*

Disagreement and Structures of Beliefs

Belief alignment is defined as 'the success we would have in predicting, given initial knowledge that an individual holds a specified attitude, that he holds certain further ideas and attitudes (Converse 1964).' The reason why this aspect is especially relevant arises when we consider the exact definition of operational ideology as the ability to predict unobserved beliefs. Predicting other people's beliefs, unless they are fervent ideologues or have strong partisan attachments, is almost an impossible task. Individual belief systems tend to be messy, and often tied together only by few symbolic components, such as affective attachments to groups (Brandt, Sibley, and Osborne 2019). When cues on such components are missing, it is difficult to foretell what the person's other views might be.

On the other hand, liberals and conservatives have undergone a turbulent process of issue alignment and tend to be ideologically congruent on more political issues than in the past (Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014; DellaPosta 2020). Although there is nothing inherently logical tying all of these various attitudes together and comparatively, issues are bundled differently across countries (Malka, Lelkes, and Soto 2019), those aware of the main ideological divide in American politics should have a much easier time predicting the beliefs of ideologues. As a consequence, the disagreement among ideologues might be especially profound since, in addition to observed beliefs on which they disagree, they can also assume disagreement on unobserved issues.

To better illustrate this claim, consider the following scenario:

Counterfactual Scenario 2. *When discussing political issues, a liberal and a conservative may quickly realize they have little in common. From the pattern of each other's beliefs, they can infer diverging views on many political agendas. Now consider another person with a mix of liberal and conservative views. When she encounters someone with whom she disagrees, she cannot assume other beliefs, not covered in the conversation, with certainty. Same as her, the differently minded counterpart does not fit neatly into ideological categories. Although they will disagree, and this may affect how they feel about each other, they are less likely to hate each other so intensely and may continue their conversation. Because they do not recognize each other's pattern of beliefs, they cannot fully grasp the extent of their disagreement.*

Some may argue that, especially when focusing on the liberal-conservative continuum, more ideological organization of beliefs simply reflects a respondent's partisanship. However, the literature on belief structures indicates otherwise. For instance, despite the profound polarization of American society, Fowler and Howell (2023) show that partisans are likely to update their positions based on information from leaders of both parties alike. Instead of blindly following co-partisan elites or being determined to disagree with out-partisans, partisans are open to adopting party-incongruent positions on a wide range of political issues.

The association between belief alignment and partisanship itself has been put into question by the Conversian literature. For instance, when controlling for political knowledge, partisanship has little independent influence on belief alignment (Barber and Pope 2018). Instead of partisanship, this literature emphasizes that merely being knowledgeable about politics, following it closely, or being 'politically sophisticated' are the single most important predictors of ideologically aligned belief structures (Fishman and Davis 2022; Hare, Highton, and Jones 2024).

H2: *People who are ideologically aligned in their beliefs feel colder toward one another when in disagreement than those who are not ideologically aligned.*

H3: *Ideologically aligned respondents expect more disagreement on beliefs that were not revealed about their counterpart than those who are not ideologically aligned.*

H3b: *This is especially true for those ideologically aligned, who recognize ideological structures, and can therefore predict unobserved beliefs.*

Research Design

Although many of the described encounters occur every day, an experiment better isolates the effect of disagreement and ideology from other characteristics driving personal sympathies. This research utilizes survey experiments to delve into the political perspectives of participants, assessing their reactions to others based on shared or divergent political beliefs and the structure of those beliefs. Despite some inherent boundaries (for instance, profile creating a strong disagreement situation for centrist respondents), this approach allows for the assignment of a diverse array of hypothetical counterparts to each participant. Unlike extant research, my methodology emphasizes a broader range of political opinions, examining their properties, content, and organization.

To this end, in the two studies, I assigned participants to hypothetical profiles depicting a broad range of political views. Each of these profiles was mirroring potential survey responses and showcasing either a liberal, conservative, or centrist stance on each issue, as if they were supplied by another participant. Statements were formulated so that agreement always reflected a liberal stance, while disagreement indicated a conservative one. Following each profile, participants were asked to report their feelings about such a person (Study 1) or to assess expected disagreement (Study 2). The first dependent variable, inter-personal animosity, is measured using standard feeling thermometer scales. For the second dependent variable, I ask how much disagreement respondent expects with such a person (the vignette made clear that this person holds more beliefs than were revealed). The response was measured on a seven-point scale from *almost never disagree* to *almost always disagree*.

To ensure the robustness of my findings, in the second study, I asked respondents to predict beliefs that were not revealed and to assess the certainty of their predictions. Those who failed to pass a basic attention test were excluded from the study. Throughout the experiment, participants were asked to share their stance on up to eight specific policy issues, choosing to agree, disagree, or remain neutral. Both designs received approval from [REDACTED]'s institutional review board. More on robustness of findings and measurement is in the *Supplementary materials*.

Although this study employs a survey-experimental framework, it uniquely assesses the impact of three main predictors - the extent of disagreement and two facets of ideology - at both the profile and individual levels. From these, one of the key predictors (policy disagreement) is always also endogenous to respondent characteristics, reflecting the theoretical distinction between different types of interactions, always involving two individuals. Hence, all variables at the treatment level were also measured at the participant level to accurately capture the range of interactions outlined in the conceptual framework.

Independent Variables

Opinionatedness and belief alignment, key indicators of an ideologue, are central variables in this study. The former is measured as the count of responses other than neutral ('neither agree nor disagree'), ranging from 0 (neutrality across all surveyed issues) to 8 (fully opinionated). I describe how respondents differ in this aspect of ideology below (see Figure 1). Many more people show some degree of centrism than ideological inconsistency. This image aligns with the existing literature that demonstrates the increasing levels of belief alignment within the American public (Levendusky 2010; DellaPosta 2020) to the point when the large share is either consistently liberal or conservative. Additionally, it reinforces the notion of prevalent moderation among the masses (Lelkes 2016), where many seem to be relatively little opinionated on many issues. In the *Supplementary materials*, I also show that centrism is more associated with political identities, such as ideological identity and partisanship, than belief alignment.

The first hypothesis posits that disagreement in cases of opinionatedness (as opposed to centrism) may result in different levels of animosity. For this purpose, I focus on instances of strong (when both the respondent and the vignette take a stance on an issue) and weak disagreement (when either one does not). In the models, I compute the number of both types of disagreement in each evaluation task. To ensure validity, I also distinguish instances of weak disagreement caused by a

centrist respondent versus those caused by a centrist experimental vignette.

Belief alignment is measured as the share of expressed attitudes that align with either liberal or conservative ideologies. This excludes Centrist responses. To categorize respondents as either ideologically aligned or not, I consider the distribution of belief alignment in the sample (see Figure 1). There is only a small number of people completely torn between liberal and conservative positions or disinterested in politics altogether. It is also noteworthy that approximately half of the sample leans consistently in either the liberal or conservative dimension. Despite that, about *25 % of the sample* reports having at least *25 % of beliefs* in the ideologically inconsistent direction. Given the prevalence of those who are ideologically aligned, I categorize all with more than a quarter of expressed beliefs (or three out of eight) as misaligned with predominant ideology, and those with one-tenth of beliefs or less ideologically misaligned (or one out of eight and less) as ideologically aligned. In the second study, I use only four highly salient beliefs instead of eight. Therefore, I categorize those consistently aligned in one ideological direction as ideologically aligned liberals or conservatives. All others were categorized as not ideologically aligned.

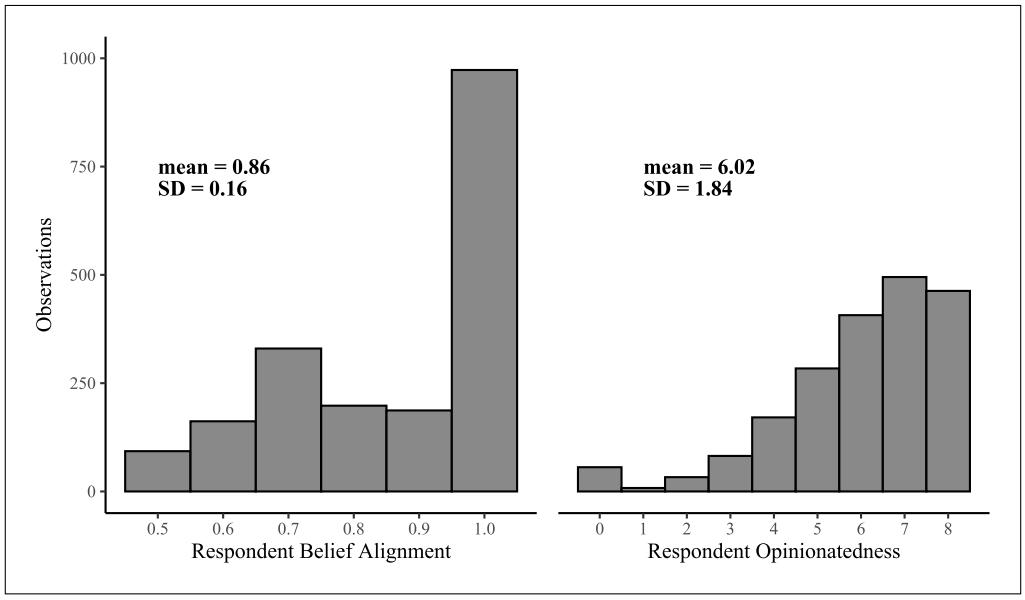

Figure 1: Respondent Belief Alignment and Opinionatedness
Note: *The distribution is based on 2000 respondents from the first study*

Study 1: Ideological Disagreement and Animosity

In the first study, I assigned 2000 participants (*January 19* to *February 1, 2024*) to the experiment, a sample representative of the US population, requiring them to complete three evaluation tasks. Views of people in hypothetical profiles were presented in color-coded tables, each containing eight views on different public policies. Using the survey experimental framework, I aim to distinguish the effects of more and less ideologically charged disagreements on feelings of animosity. First, I focus on the difference between strong (opinionated) and weak disagreement.

Opinionatedness

In the test of the first hypothesis, I expose each respondent to vignettes that allow for both types of disagreement. For statistical power, I limited the number of centrist answers in vignettes to four, so for strong disagreement, I will also use cases where divergence does not exceed disagreement on four policies. This gives me 4572 evaluation tasks as observations. The model, which targets within-subject differences in evaluating hypothetical counterparts, includes errors clustered at the respondent level and is specified as follows:

$$\text{animosity}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \text{strong\_disagreement}_i + \beta_2 \times \text{weak\_disagreement}_i + u_{j[i]} + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Animosity is modeled for each evaluation of experimental vignette i, and errors are clustered for each respondent j. The baseline condition is agreement on all issues (either because the respondent is disinterested or similar-minded to the vignette). In the second model of animosity, I explore weak disagreement again, but instead of focusing on opinionated respondents, I turn to Centrists and their feelings toward opinionated counterparts. This implies the same type of disagreement but for different types of respondents. As a result, the change in feelings might be different from the weak disagreement between opinionated respondents exposed to Centrist experimental vignettes. To assess this opposite relationship, I fit a similar model to the previous one, but in this case, I model weak disagreement of Centrist respondents with opinionated vignettes.

First, let us compare the effects of weak and strong disagreement on each additional policy. The model yields a baseline average evaluation of *69 points* [2] on the thermometer scale in the case of full agreement. A strong disagreement results in a cooling off by *9.1 points* ($SE = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$) on this scale, whereas a weak disagreement results in only slightly less warm feelings, a *2.5-point* ($SE = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$) drop in affection. Given these effects, a profile with the full possible disagreement in this model (four out of eight policies) would, on average, be rated at *59 points* in the case of a disinterested counterpart (weak disagreement) but at *33 points* in the case of true divergence in political views (strong disagreement).

Second, the experimental setup enables us to explore weak disagreement more thoroughly. It is not only the vignette that might contain non-attitudes, but respondents themselves might hold centrist views. Among Centrists, exposure to other Centrists might not result in feelings of particular warmth as they are not taking sides. Conversely, it is possible that Centrists dislike opinionated counterparts, whose encounter is an instance of weak disagreement. The effect of weak disagreement, however, is similar to that before. When a Centrist encounters an opinionated counterpart, their warmth of feelings decreases by *2.2 points* ($SE = 0.25$, $p<0.001$) for each issue on which the counterpart is opinionated. However, the baseline differs between the groups. Opinionated respondents exposed to like-minded vignettes provide an average favorable rating of *69 points* ($SE =$

2. In the survey setup, the feeling thermometer scale had a starting position at a value of zero. Consequently, these values might be somewhat lower than in studies where the starting value is set to the middle of the scale. Using questions from the same survey, Democrats reported an average warmth of feelings of 76 points (SD = 20.1) toward their co-partisans, while Republicans reported a similar value of 75 points (SD = 20.7). This analysis also includes Independents, and the baseline reflects pairs of Centrists with no partisan identity and often disinterest in politics altogether. More robustness testing on people with different baselines is in the *Supplementary Materials*

0.8), whereas Centrists express much colder feelings towards other Centrist profiles, with an average rating of *56.3 points* (*SE = 0.71*). There is a lower affinity in feelings among Centrist respondents toward other Centrists.

Lastly, let us focus on how strong and weak disagreement differ according to the issue at stake. In this study, unlike earlier investigations into substantive disagreement, I present participants with comprehensive profiles that encapsulate a broad spectrum of eight policy attitudes simultaneously, offering an opportunity for new exploration. Overall, the issue at stake appears to matter, with disagreement on some issues leading to twice as much animosity as on others (see Figure 2). On contentious topics such as *abortion* (9.2 points, SE = 0.81), *firearms regulation* (10 points, SE = 0.76), and *immigration* (9.5 points, SE = 0.76) policies, disagreement leads to higher levels of animosity. All of these issue were at the center of public debate at the time. On the other hand, disagreement on issues such as *racial disparities in homeownership rates* (5.5 points, SE = 0.8) and *definitions of sexual harassment* (5.5 points, SE = 0.77) leads to the least animosity, despite being identified as prominent identitarian and very contentious issues in previous presidential elections (Sides, Tausanovitch, and Vavreck 2022). When focusing on cases of weak disagreement on individual issues, I detect no significant effects on animosity. Although there appears to be some heterogeneity, the analysis is not sufficiently powered to detect these effects for individual types of issues beyond the average effect reported earlier.

Belief Alignment

To test the second hypothesis, I focus on the second sign of an ideologue—ideological alignment of beliefs. For this purpose, I model the effect of disagreement on interpersonal animosity for those who are ideologically aligned and those who are not (see Equation 2). Specifically, I use a policy mismatch variable, which combines strong and weak policy disagreement and simply indicates how many issues the respondent's beliefs and the beliefs in the experimental vignette match. Errors are clustered at the respondent level once again.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{animosity}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times \text{policy\_mismatch}_i + \beta_2 \times \text{Aligned}_i \\ + \beta_3 \times (\text{policy\_mismatch}_i \times \text{Aligned}_i) + u_{j[i]} + \epsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Using this model, I find strong support for the hypothesis (see Figure 3). Ideologically aligned exhibit a pronounced bifurcation in their emotional responses, which are being very warm for their ideological in-group, whom they regard with high esteem (average rating of *71.2 points*, *SE = 0.92*) and those with whom they disagree (for six out of eight policies: average rating of *20.3 points*, *SE = 1.15*). The decrease in sympathies is more or less linear, although the drop in feelings is somewhat less pronounced in the case of very few or many misaligned political views.

Whereas the drop in feelings between such a different-minded and similar-minded counterpart is about *50.9 points* among ideologically aligned, it is only *18.9 points* among people who are not aligned in beliefs. These people do not feel particularly warm toward similar-minded counterparts (*52.6 points, SE = 3.1*). But even among them, policy disagreement matters. In instances of higher substantive disagreement (six out of eight policies mismatched), they give, on average, a rating of

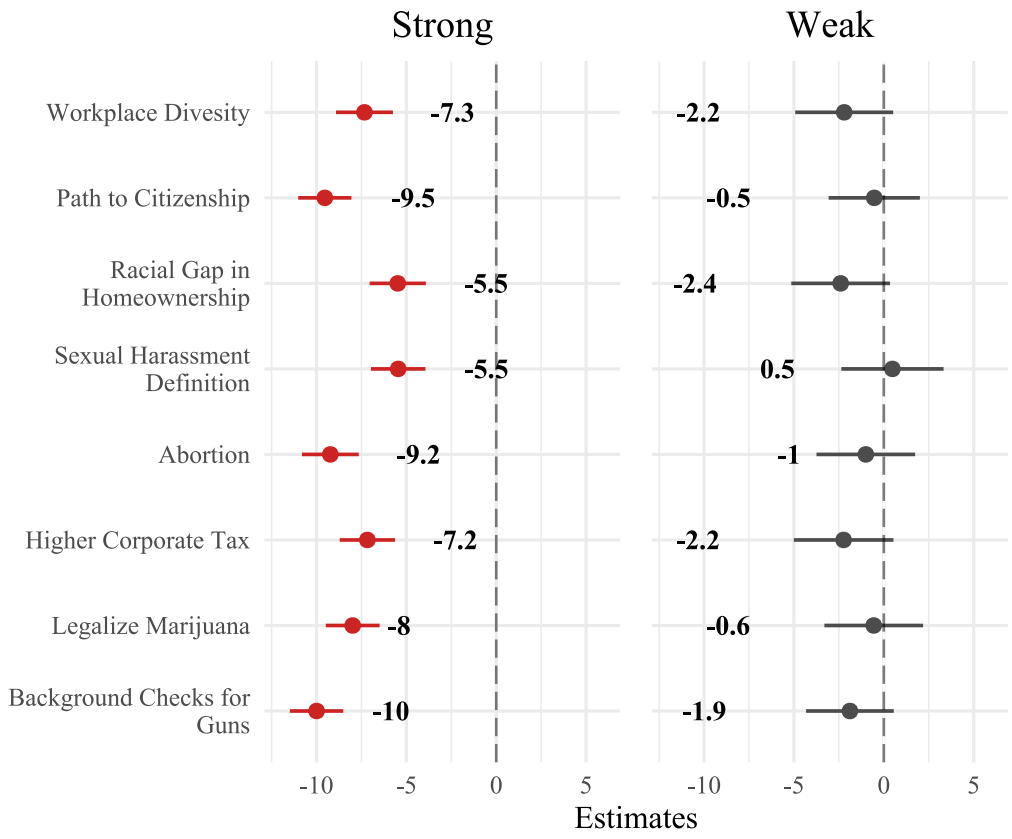

Figure 2: Animosity Due to Disagreement on Individual Policies
Notes: *The estimates correspond to the disagreement on each issue, holding disagreement on other issues constant. Standard errors are clustered at the respondent level. Strong and weak disagreements were modeled separately.*

33.7 points ($SE = 3.4$). Although higher than in the case of ideologically aligned ideologues, it is still a rather unfavorable feeling.

With this model, I demonstrate that the same level of substantive disagreement can result in varying degrees of political animosity based on ideological alignment. As theorized, this may be a direct consequence of highly structured beliefs, which are easily comprehensible to most, or at least to those who are sufficiently politically sophisticated. The model shows that liberals and conservatives feel quite warm towards like-minded individuals and quite cold towards those with opposing views. These in-group and out-group dynamics (representing the two ends of the policy disagreement continuum) involve counterparts with tightly organized beliefs within understandable ideologies. Conversely, the same substantive differences have a lesser impact on the feelings of others. Unlike ideologically aligned ideologues, they do not perceive ideological patterns among similar-minded and different-minded individuals and can only base their feelings on observed views. To better assess if this is indeed the case, I conducted another study focusing on how both groups perceive mutual disagreement.

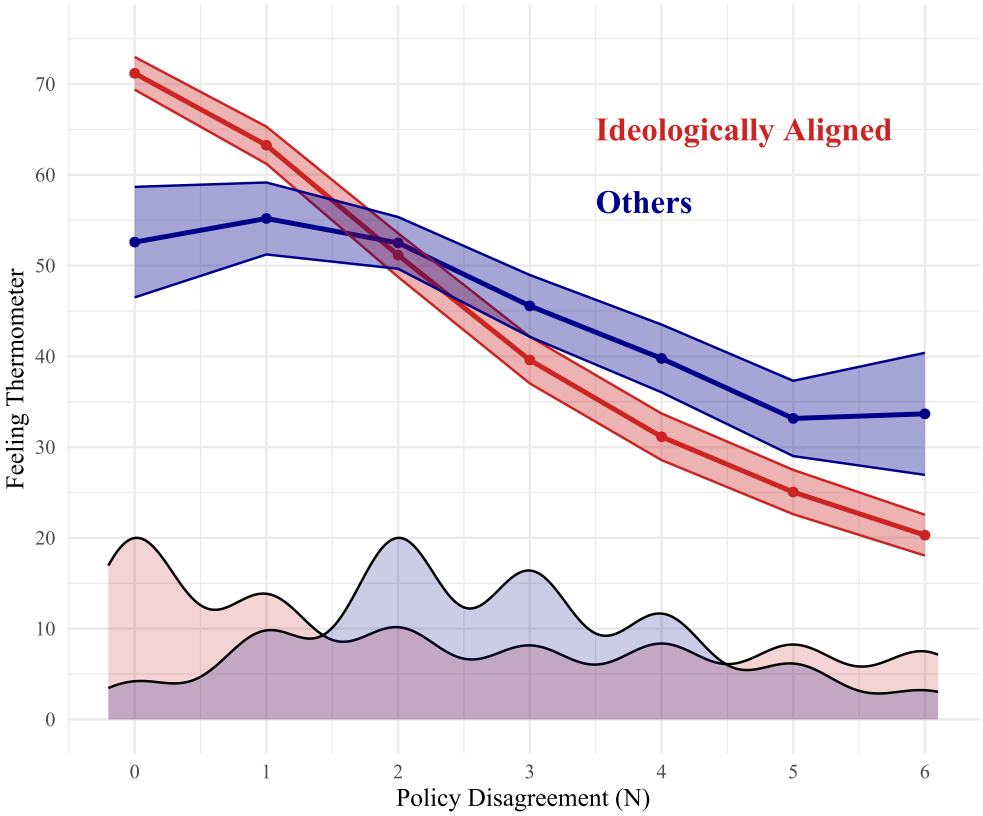

Figure 3: Policy Disagreement for Ideologically Aligned and Not Aligned
Note: *The upper bound of the policy disagreement variable is defined by the lower number of experimental scenarios that result in very high disagreement for individuals with less organized belief systems. No centrist vignettes are included in this prediction.*

Study 2: Belief Structures and Expected Disagreement

In the second study (N = 2000, *May 17* to *May 30, 2024*), I focus on how the ideological alignment of beliefs changes the nature of disagreement itself. In the third hypothesis, I posit that the extent of policy disagreement varies as a function of ideological alignment, even when the level of disagreement on observed policies is the same, because ideologues expect to disagree more than others. This hypothesis, along with its subhypothesis—claiming that this is especially true when people recognize ideological structures—is tested in this second study.

Each respondent was shown four vignettes, each containing four views: a liberal vignette, a conservative vignette a centrist vignette, and a vignette with randomized mix of liberal and conservative views. This setup covers all necessary scenarios for the analysis. Respondents also gave their views on all the policies randomly assigned to vignettes, measured on a ten-point scale. Focusing on differences in structures, I included only those with at least two non-centrist attitudes. Each vignette informed respondents that there were two other views not revealed: on *student debt relief* and the *ceasefire in Gaza*. These issues were selected as the least related to the sampled policy views and based on their prominence in the media during the data collection. After each vignette, respondents were asked to guess stances on these issues.

In addition to what has already been presented, we need to include another variable in this analysis. The ability to understand ideological patterns, or sophistication, is crucial for this observed heterogeneity. A key concept in Converse (1964), it plays a vital role in explaining why some people are ideologues and others are not. It refers to the individual's ability to recognize ideology and conceptualize the political world in ideological terms. By asking respondents to infer unobserved views from observed attitudes, I can directly measure their understanding of 'what goes with what.' Given the interest in sophistication, I no longer color-code views or organize them in a table. Instead, I use fully worded opinions in the experimental vignettes (e.g., 'She would tax richer people at a higher rate') rather than simple agreement statements.

Sophistication was measured as the number of positions predicted in an ideologically congruent direction for liberal and conservative vignettes. I differentiate between those who could recognize ideology in both vignettes, termed sophisticated respondents ($N = 1061$), and those who could not identify more than half correctly were categorized as less sophisticated ($N = 939$). As shown in the *Supplementary materials*, respondents found it easier to predict the beliefs of liberals than conservatives, but there is a sufficient number of sophisticated respondents in all subpopulations of interest.

Finally, I needed to differentiate between vignettes that are similar-minded and different-minded to the respondent. Since centrist opinions only appear in the Centrist vignette, analyzed separately, I focused on strong disagreement. I used liberal and conservative vignettes as the different-minded and similar-minded categories for liberals and conservatives. For non-ideologues, I categorized different-minded vignettes as those with strong disagreement on two or more issues; less strong disagreement (one issue or fewer) was categorized as a similar-minded vignette. This way, non-ideologues are comparable to liberals and conservatives, who may disagree on a maximum of one policy with the in-group vignette and on at least two policies with the out-group.

Belief Structures, Sophistication, and Expected Disagreement

First, let us focus on the pooled differences in disagreement among pairs of individuals, both sophisticated and unsophisticated (see Figure 4).Ideologically aligned expect some disagreement with both similar-minded (3.08, $SE = 0.04$) and centrist (3.17, $SE = 0.05$) vignettes. The disagreement does not significantly differ between these two vignettes, despite the fact that the former matched some (one to four) non-centrist opinions of respondents. However, they expect substantially more disagreement with different-minded vignettes (3.6, $SE = 0.04$). The difference in expected disagreement is approximately 0.52 points on the seven-point scale.

Conversely, the contrast between expected disagreement with similar-minded and different-minded counterparts showed an average 1.43 point difference among liberal respondents and an average 1.47 point difference among conservative respondents. Both liberals (2.61, $SE = 0.05$) and conservatives (2.71, $SE = 0.08$) expect little disagreement with their similar-minded peers when assessing expected disagreement. Moreover, they anticipate rather high disagreement from different-minded counterparts. Conservatives expected a disagreement level of 4.18 ($SE = 0.08$), while liberals expected a disagreement level of 4.04 ($SE = 0.05$) on the seven-point scale. The differences between liberals and conservatives are insignificant. Similarly, there are no significant

differences in the evaluations of centrist vignettes, as all three groups are similar in terms of opinionatedness.

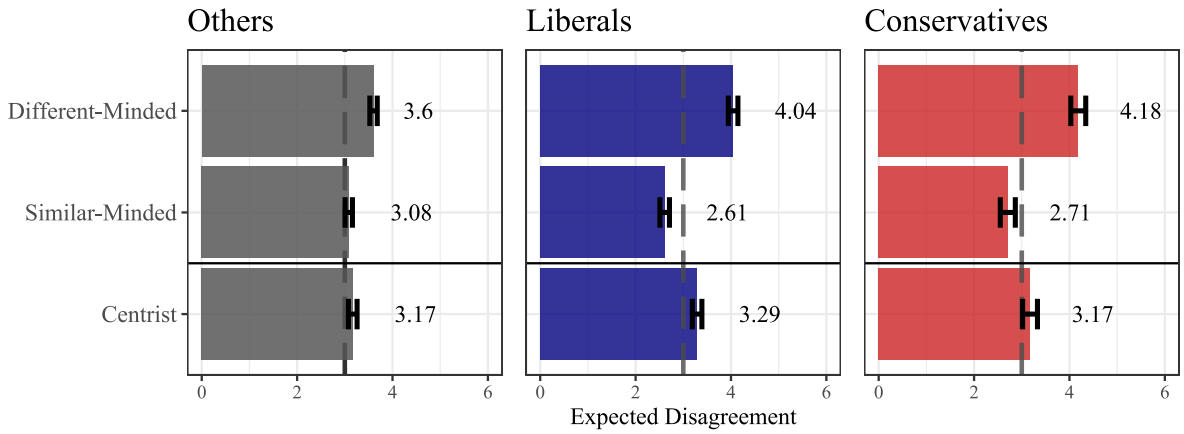

Figure 4: Expected Disagreement For Liberals, Conservatives and Others
Note: *The models contain 1099 observations for conservatives, 2626 observations for liberals, and 3343 observations for non-ideologes.*

To test the subhypothesis (H3b), we turn our attention to the role of sophistication in the heterogeneity of responses. Sophisticated (*53%*) and unsophisticated (*47%*) respondents form subpopulations of similar size. These groups are slightly more common among liberals and conservatives (*63%* and *65%*, respectively) than among Conversians (*48%*). However, they are sufficiently represented across all groups.

Unsophisticated liberals, conservatives, and others exhibit only limited heterogeneity in their responses to similar-minded and different-minded vignettes on average (see Figure 5). Low-sophistication non-ideologues do not expect significantly more disagreement from different-minded respondents (*3.25 points, SE = 0.06*) than from similar-minded respondents (*3.13 points, SE = 0.05*). The expected disagreement towards similar-minded counterparts among less sophisticated liberals (*3, SE = 0.08*) and conservatives (*2.9, SE = 0.13*) differs slightly from the expected disagreement towards different-minded counterparts (liberals: *3.3, SE = 0.08*, conservatives: *3.5, SE = 0.13*), but the difference is rather small.

This pattern does not hold for more sophisticated individuals. Significant differences are evident in all groups. Different-minded respondents have higher average levels of expected disagreement: *4.5* (*SE = 0.06*) among liberals, *4.6* (*SE = 0.1*) among conservatives, and *3.9* (*SE = 0.06*) among others. Sophisticated subpopulations exhibit higher expected disagreement with different-minded counterparts, specifically around *1.2 points* among liberals and conservatives. This trend is also present, though to a lesser extent, among non-ideologues (*0.6 point* difference). This is, however, not surprising, as the beliefs of those who are not pure ideologues may also be somewhat structured (quasi-ideologues), allowing for some predictability of unobserved beliefs among those who are somewhat aligned in their beliefs.

Lastly, consider the feelings towards similar-minded counterparts. Unlike their less sophisticated counterparts, sophisticated individuals expect not only more disagreement with different-minded

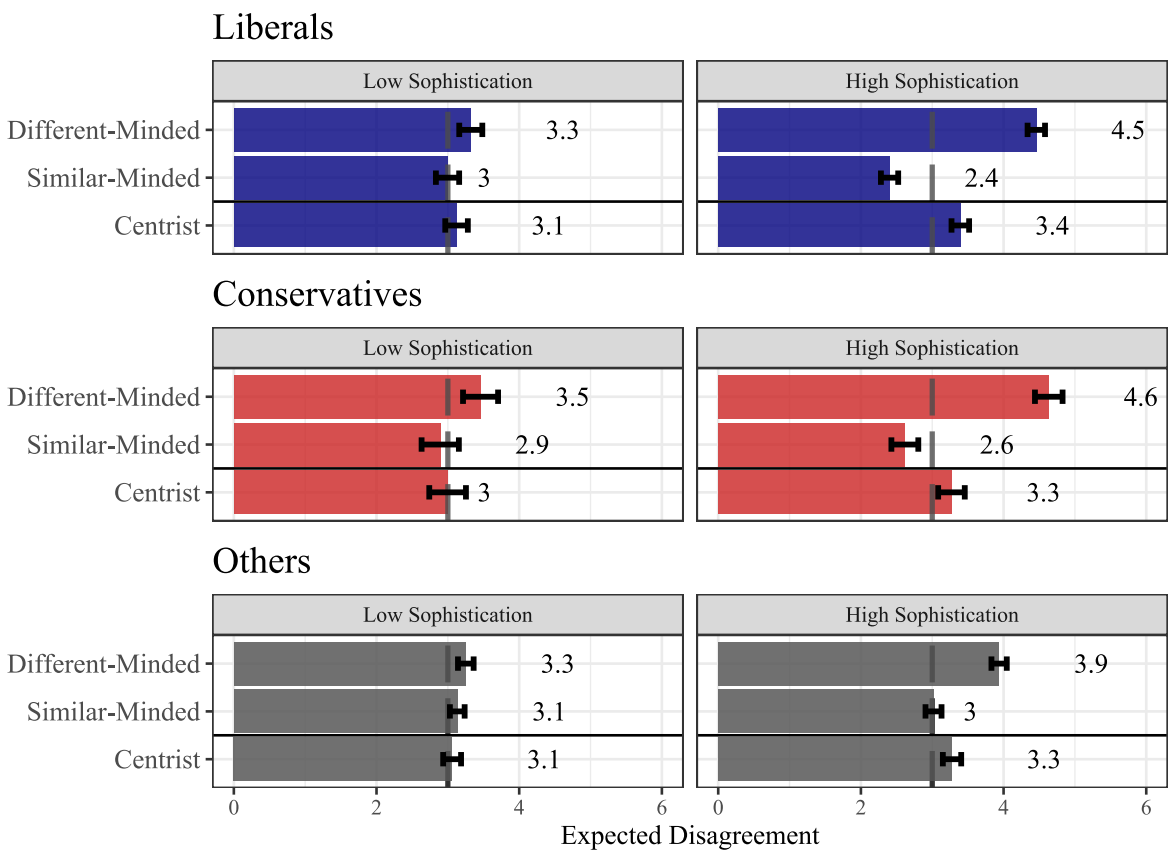

Figure 5: Expected Disagreement by Ideology and Sophistication

people but also much less disagreement from similar-minded people. Sophisticated liberals (*2.4 points, SE = 0.06*) and conservatives (*2.6 points, SE = 0.1*) expect lower levels of disagreement from such vignettes. However, this is not true for others (*3 points, SE = 0.06*). Overall, sophistication plays a crucial role in heterogeneous responses to expected disagreement. It leads to a substantial gap (*2.1 points* for liberals, *2 points* for conservatives) in expected disagreement based on observed disagreement among ideologues, but a much smaller gap (*0.9 points*) among non-ideologues, who are less ideologically aligned.

Conclusions

As recent research has found, political animosity is largely a product of disagreement (Orr and Huber 2020; Dias and Lelkes 2022; Orr, Fowler, and Huber 2023). As shown in this study, who disagrees, if it is an ideologue or not, also greatly matters. Disagreement among ideologues results in more affective evaluations and higher expectations of further disagreement. Elucidating this difference, this research corroborates the notion of the 'other divide' in American politics, which distinguishes between people deeply involved in politics and those who are less attached to it (Klar and Krupnikov 2016; Krupnikov and Ryan 2022). This divide crosses partisan boundaries and

creates divisions within parties. Similarly, I show here that, both within and outside political parties, ideologues are bound to disagree differently, and that this difference matters. Additionally, as shown in the case of disagreement with Centrists, ideologues often despise even those standing in the middle, albeit not as intensely as their different-minded counterparts.

The other divide, in this case, is not defined by people's political behaviors but by their beliefs and the organization of those beliefs. Although there is little evidence that political involvement has increased over time, multiple studies show that belief alignment in the mass population has steadily increased, producing more ideologues (Jewitt and Goren 2016; Hare 2022). This change also affects those who were previously unaware of ideology and increases numbers of ideologues even in unlikely groups (Hare 2022; Hare, Highton, and Jones 2024). Normatively, this is not necessarily undesirable—better conceptualization of the political space is something early theorists, such as Converse (1964), sought to achieve. However, if we are concerned about political animosity, its increase is even more likely with the growing number of people who are opinionated and whose beliefs are ideologically structured.

With the growing interest in affective polarization research in many new contexts (Wagner 2024), this study serves as a reminder that partisan identities are often insufficient to fully understand political animosity. Despite some commendable exceptions (Harteveld 2021; Algara and Zur 2023; Comellas and Torcal 2023), the existing comparative research often fails to consider underlying ideological polarization and how such is tied to partisan identities. Thus, the extent to which affective polarization stems from ideological polarization across different contexts remains an open question.

This study, however, suggests a mechanism linking ideological and affective polarization that should be generalizable across contexts, after accounting for differences in ideological configurations. By finding support for the role of ideology in both affective evaluations and expected disagreement, these results indicate that opinionatedness, combined with beliefs organized in recognizable structures, changes the nature of disagreement for individuals who are able to identify ideological patterns of beliefs. In such instances, a person can predict beliefs they do not observe, expect more disagreement within the limited information space, and react with higher animosity toward their ideological adversary. A more rigorous test, involving experimental manipulation of one's belief structures, might be necessary to fully establish the internal validity of this causal mechanism. Adjustments to other contexts should also consider the plurality of belief systems within a particular setting. For instance, recent research has found that most European countries typically contain 2–5 different belief systems (Van Noord et al. 2024). Therefore, applying this framework to such settings should engage in comparing disagreement between ideologues across all possible pairs of belief systems. Focusing on alignment within and across these belief systems could further illuminate the dynamics of political animosity in multiparty democracies.

I acknowledge some limitations of this paper related to external validity and shortcomings in some aspects of my argumentation that should be further examined in subsequent research. First, all experimentation in the two studies is confined to an online survey, which raises potential concerns about its validity in real-world settings. However, across the two studies, I made several efforts to reinforce experimental realism, framing the hypothetical counterparts as if the answers came from

another respondent. Second, more importantly, to test the hypotheses, this study omitted several theoretically relevant elements that should be further investigated in future research. For the sake of simplicity, I conflated genuine centrism with attitude ambivalence while studying the difference in disagreement between opinionated and other counterparts. Disentangling these two concepts is necessary for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at play. Additionally, although this study tested robustness against identities, it sidestepped identity-related considerations, such as partisan or ideological identities. While these tend to be empirically disconnected from belief structures (Mason 2018), they may not be perceived as such. Therefore, future research should integrate identities into discussions of the effects of beliefs and their structures to ensure the robustness of these findings.

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Hatred Takes an Ideologue

Supplementary Materials

Author(s)

This version: January 19, 2025

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Experimental Design

Data Collection and Ethical Review

Data collection for both studies was realized through an online panel provider - *YouGov*. Both survey experiments were included at the end of the America's Political Pulse survey (Iyengar, Lelkes, and Westwood 2024). More on representativeness of the survey is in the section Sample statistics. The survey screens respondents with a short attention check (a made-up news story, which is removed and respondent asked on one key feature of that story) at the beginning of the survey. Both experiments were approved by [REDACTED] IRB (considered exempt from review) as [REDACTED].

Study 1 - Full Wording

In the survey, I first asked whether respondent `agrees - neither agrees nor disagrees - disagrees` with following propositions:

- `The definition of sexual harassment should be expanded.`
- `We ought to increase the top US corporate income tax.`
- `There should be universal background checks for all gun purchases.`
- `There should be a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.`
- `Abortion information should be more accessible.`
- `We should have policies reducing the racial homeownership gap.`
- `Diversity initiatives in American workplaces should be promoted.`
- `We should legalize marijuana for personal and medical use.`

The order of all items was randomized.

Next, respondent was instructed in a way feeling thermometers work. She was asked to review three profiles presented in the tabular form. These profiles consisted of somewhat simplified, but the same propositions and same types of answers as in the preceding survey, as if answered by another respondent. The positions were color-coded to facilitate orientation. The order of attributes was randomized across vignettes. The assignment of particular levels (`agree - neither agree nor disagree - disagree`) was randomized. The number of *neither agree nor disagre* options was limited to four in each vignette. An illustrative example is in Figure 1.

Accessible abortion information	Agree
Legalize marijuana for personal and medical use	Disagree
Universal background checks for gun purchases	Disagree
Increase the top US corporate income tax	Agree
Diversity initiatives in American workplaces promoted	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants	Disagree
Reduce the racial homeownership gap	Disagree
The definition of sexual harassment should be expanded	Disagree

Figure 1: Illustrative hypothetical counterpart

Respondents were then asked: `On the feeling thermometer scale of 0 to 100, how cold or warm do you feel about this person?` The answers ranged between 0 and 100.

Study 2 - Full Wording

In the second study, I took advantage of policy attitudes that are part of the America's Political Pulse survey. From the total number of 10 attitudes on economic and social matters, a set of five policy items is randomly selected to appear in the survey. During the weeks of data collection, respondents were asked about: *graduated taxes, energy policy, health insurance, restrictions on trade*, and *gun regulations*. The attitudes were measured on 7-point Likert scales. The response order was randomly reversed. The potential differences due to larger opinion scale length are discussed in one of the sections. For the purpose of analysis, I only differentiate between three categories: two directed policy attitudes and centrist 'middle-of-the-road' position. For that purpose, I transformed these answers into three scales with all the middle values (4) in the centrist category, and all larger or smaller values as either liberal or conservative answers. *The part one and two were randomly switched in this and all other vignettes.*

Graduated taxes

`Some believe that {1: richer people should pay a larger percentage of their income in taxes, as compared to poorer people}. Others believe that {2: every person should pay the same percentage of their income in taxes, regardless of how much they earn}. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?`

`1 = Tax richer people at a higher rate, 2, 3, 4 = Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides, 5, 6, 7 = Tax everyone at the same rate`

Energy policy

Some believe that {1: the federal government should decrease U.S. production of natural gas and coal}. Others believe that {2: the federal government should increase U.S. production of natural gas and coal}. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1 = Decrease U.S. production of natural gas and coal, 2, 3, 4 = Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides, 5, 6, 7 = Increase U.S. production of natural gas and coal

Health insurance

Some believe that {1: there should be a government insurance plan that covers all medical expenses for everyone}. Others believe that {2: medical expenses should be paid by individuals and through private insurance plans}. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1 = Implement government health insurance for everyone, 2, 3, 4 = Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides, 5, 6, 7 = Have individuals and private insurance pay medical expenses

Restrictions on trade

Some believe that {1: the U.S. should limit imports from other countries to protect American industries and jobs}. Others believe that {2: the U.S. should allow free trade to keep prices low, no matter what country a product come from}. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1 = Limit free trade, 2, 3, 4 = Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides, 5, 6, 7 = Allow free trade

Gun regulations

Some believe that {1: manufacturing, possessing, and selling assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons should be banned}. Others believe that {2: manufacturing, possessing, and selling assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons should not be restricted}. Still others fall somewhere between these two positions. Where do you stand on this issue?

1 = Ban the manufacture, possession, and sale of assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons, 2, 3, 4 = Middle of the road; see the pros and cons of both sides, 5, 6, 7 = Do not restrict the manufacture, possession, and sale of assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons

The full wording of all the items is also available in the core questions file of the survey.

In the experimental part, respondents were exposed to four vignette descriptions of other people. The vignettes followed this pattern:

`During a conversation, an acquaintance said that {gender} {belief1} and that {gender} {belief2}. Furthermore, {gender} {belief3} and {gender} {belief4}. Additionally, {gender} also shared beliefs on student debt relief and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.`

The `gender` pronoun was randomly assigned as either `he` or `she` for each vignette. The *belief* variables (i.e., `belief1, belief2, belief3, belief4`) were randomly selected from five variables presented in the survey. All but one policy attitude were included. The levels of policy attitudes corresponded to the wording in the survey. Therefore, for a liberal vignette, if `belief1` was *gun restrictions*, the wording was `he/she would band the manufacture, possession and sale of assault rigles and semi-automatic weapons` and so on.

The middle of the road options in the *centrist* vignette were slightly modified. The wording in that case follows the same pattern for all the policies. The specific formulations go as follows

Graduated taxes `"thinks that on graduated taxes, there are pros and cons on both sides"`

Energy policy `"thinks that on US production of coal and natural gas, there are pros and cons on both sides"`

Health insurance `"thinks that on health insurance, there are pros and cons on both sides"`

Restrictions on trade `"thinks that on international trade, there are pros and cons on both sides"`

Gun regulations `"thinks that on restricting access to guns, there are pros and cons on both sides"`

Each vignette was immediately followed by a guessing exercise. The instructions were:

`We would like you to predict the views that weren't revealed. Do you think that this person agrees or disagrees with the following statements?` .

The statements were worded as follows with the possible answers being `agree` or `disagree`.

- `The government has a duty to provide debt relief for vulnerable students.`
- `Israel should negotiate an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, regardless of the costs.`

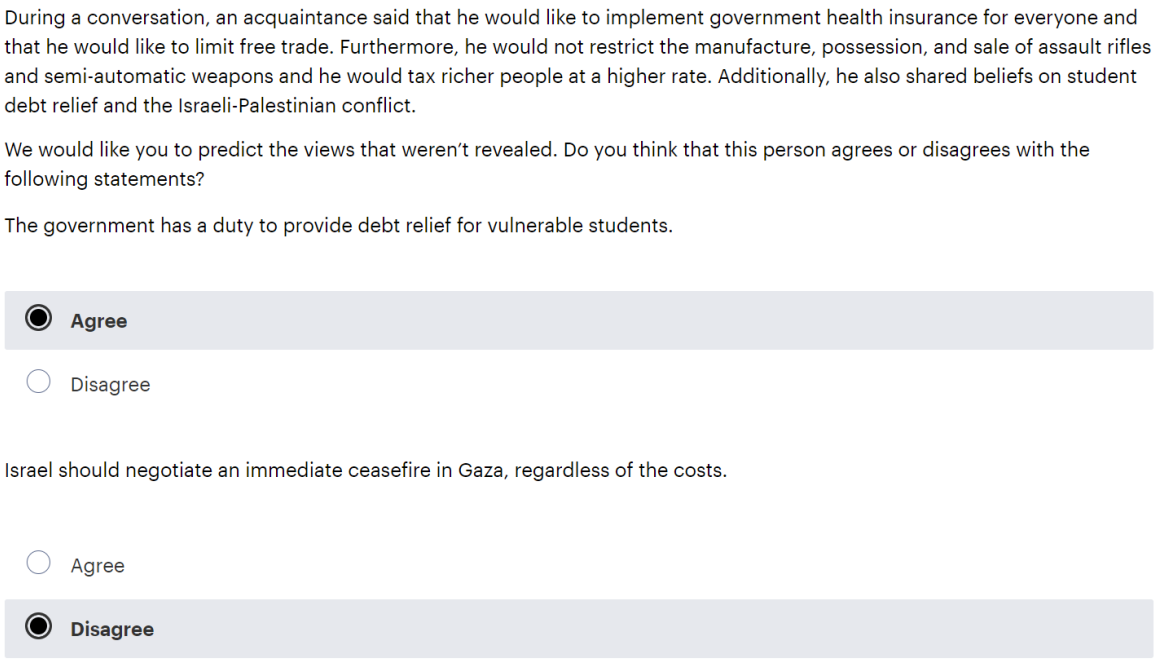

Figure 2: Illustrative vignette

The illustrative vignette is shown in Figure 2.

The dependent variable (*expected disagreement*) was measured at a 7-point scale and worded followingly:

`How much disagreement with this person do you anticipate regarding public policies?`

`1 = Almost never disagree, 2, 3, 4 = Occasionally disagree, 5, 6, 7 = Almost always disagree`

Descriptive Statistics

Sample statistics

The descriptive statistics for the main demographic variables are summarized in Table 1 (for Study 1) and Table 2 (for Study 2). Demographic variables are worded in the usual way.

Variable	**Mean**	**St. Dev.**	**Min**	**Median**	**Max**
Birth year	1,975	17.614	1,932	1,976	2,004
		Frequencies			
Variable	*Categories*	*Freq*	*%*		
Race	White	1308	65.40		
	Black	251	12.55		
	Hispanic	282	14.10		
	Other	159	7.95		
Gender	Female	1033	51.65		
	Male	967	48.35		
Education	No high school	84	4.20		
	High School	665	33.25		
	Some college	396	19.80		
	2-year	220	11.00		
	4-year	391	19.55		
	Post-grad	244	12.20		

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (Study 1)

Variable	**Mean**	**St. Dev.**	**Min**	**Median**	**Max**
Birth year	1,974	17.582	1,929	1,974	2,004
		Frequencies			
Variable	*Categories*	*Freq*	*%*		
Race	White	1272	63.60		
	Black	238	11.90		
	Hispanic	308	15.40		
	Other	182	9.10		
Gender	Female	1058	52.90		
	Male	942	47.10		
Education	No high school	87	4.35		
	High School	641	32.05		
	Some college	388	19.40		
	2-year	234	11.70		
	4-year	410	20.50		
	Post-grad	240	12.00		

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (Study 2)

Correlates of Ideology

Using a series of bivariate regressions, I describe some covariates of both new measures. Specifically, I focus on the most relevant political identities (ideological identity and partisanship), political interest, and affective polarization. The wording for the survey items used to measure these covariates, along with some descriptive statistics, can be found in the core questions file of the America's Political Pulse survey. I emphasize these covariates to demonstrate the convergent validity of the measurement and the association that both dimensions of ideology have with other common predictors of polarization.

The correlates of opinionatedness demonstrate the convergent validity of the measurement. Individuals who follow political news and those identifying as strong ideologues exhibit fewer centrist views. Those who follow politics have, on average, *0.8* ($SE = 0.18$) fewer Centrist views than those who rarely follow it, and strong ideologues have *1.1* ($SE = 0.11$) fewer Centrist views than those who identify with the ideological center. Strong partisans have, on average, *0.8* ($SE = 0.14$) fewer Centrist views than Independents. However, the differences are not so profound as to suggest that those disconnected from politics provide only undirected and unrevealing answers (Hill and Kriesi 2001; Hare, Highton, and Jones 2024).

On the other hand, few of these variables predict belief alignment. Those identifying with ideological extremes have a higher degree of belief alignment (*0.05*, $SE = 0.01$) on average, which is expected from a measure of ideology. However, this equals an average difference of half an opinion (out of eight) in the dominant ideological direction—not a particularly strong relationship, consistent with Mason (2018). The effects of partisan identity strength (*0.04,* $SE = 0.01$) or political interest (*0.03,* $SE = 0.01$) are even weaker. As a measure of ideology, belief alignment appears to be much more orthogonal to common predictors of ideology than opinionatedness. This pattern aligns with the Conversian debate (Barber and Pope 2018; Fishman and Davis 2022) and the critique raised by Broockman and Lauderdale (2024), who argue for the inclusion of middle options on attitude scales when evaluating political moderation. As shown here, strong political identities, affective polarization, and interest in politics are more closely linked to opinionatedness rather than inconsistency in beliefs. Both dimensions of ideology (opinionatedness and alignment) are only moderately correlated ($r = 0.13$), indicating that belief alignment is associated with less centrism, albeit the association is very weak.

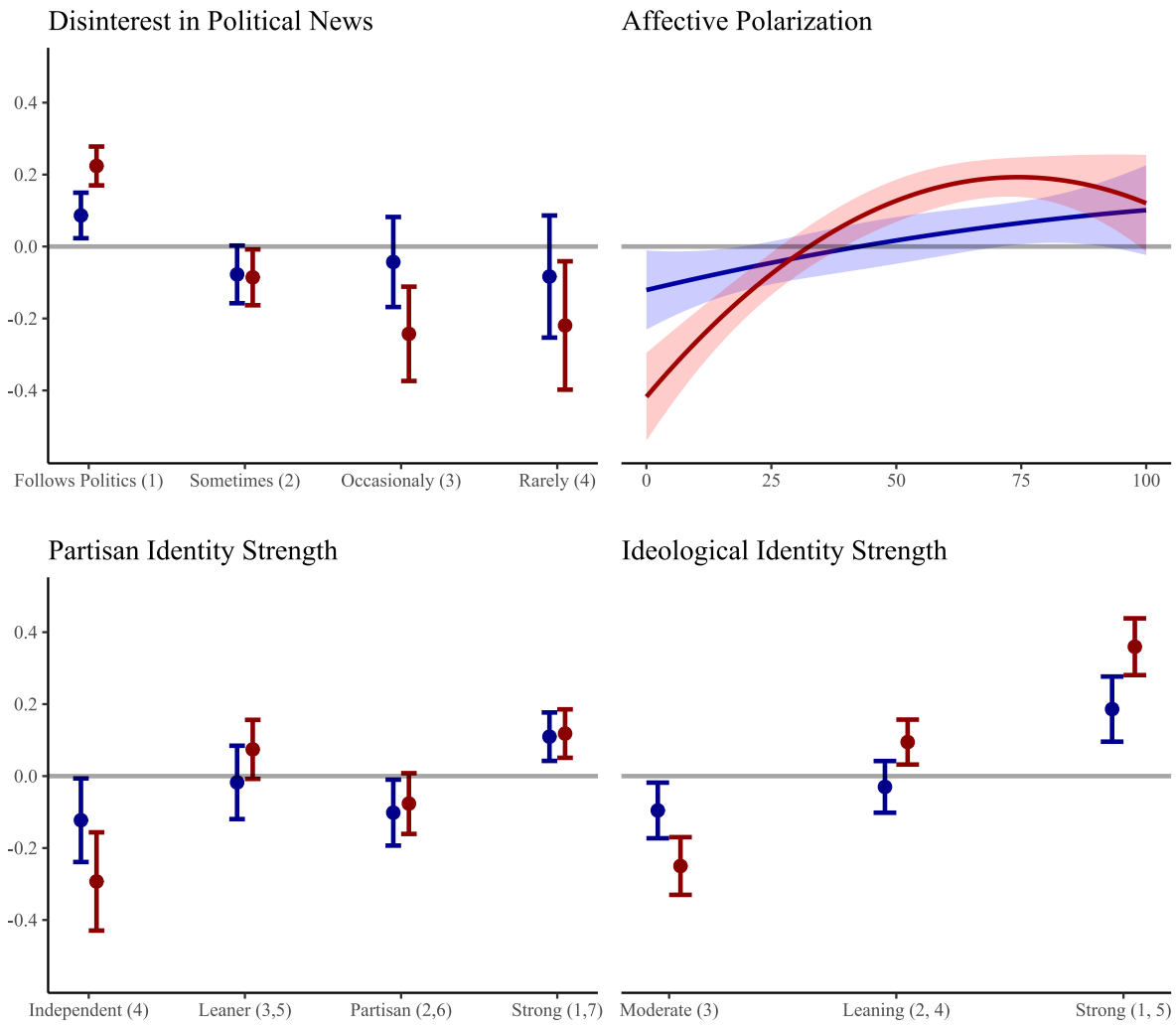

Figure 3: Predictors of Opinionatedness and Belief Alignment
Note: *Belief alignment is predicted in the blue color and opinionatedness in red.*

Measurement

Opinion Scale Length

In the first study, I rely on a simplified measurement of attitudes. Some may argue that using only short (three-point) opinion scales may be too reductionist and lead to biases. It could be argued that longer opinion scales might provide more nuance, especially when considering the middle-of-the-road centrism relative to weakly held attitudes. For that purpose, I contrast the distribution of attitudes in my sample with *America's Political Pulse*'s (Iyengar, Lelkes, and Westwood 2024) previous measurement of policy attitudes on a longer, seven-point scale. Data collection was conducted in the two weeks preceding the data collection for the experiment, and the sample size was identical (N = 2000).

The America's Political Pulse survey includes ten opinion scales for which I randomly chose eight following policies:

- natural gas and coal production
- labor unions promoted
- government health insurance
- limit imports
- transgender athletes compete based on gender
- abortion allowed in all circumstances
- defund police departments
- ban ownership and selling of rifles and semi-automatic weapons

To contrast ideological thinking in both samples, I use a compound measure, the belief constraint, which is computed as the number of 1) non-Centrist opinions that are 2) consistent with the prevalent ideological direction. As such, it incorporates both opinionatedness and alignment in a single measure. This measure expresses the number of constrained attitudes (out of total eight) in the first study and in the *America's Political Pulse* survey. Both distributions are depicted in Figure 4.

There are two noteworthy distinctions. The kurtosis of the belief constraint distribution in the first experiment is lower than in the survey. This is also noticeable on the upper tail of the distribution, where ideologues are overrepresented in the experimental study. However, these differences are likely due to the selection of issues than any measurement bias. For the experiment, I selected high salience issues that can be clearly associated with either Republican or Democrat policy. This was motivated by the clarity of ideological positions on these issues. The survey, on the other hand, uses positions that are not clearly demarcated. They may either divide supporters within one of the parties (e.g., transgender athletes, defund police departments), or cross-cut both sides (e.g., labor unions increasingly promoted by the Republicans as well).

Despite these deviations in issue selection, both distributions show many similarities, such as the noticeable skewness to the right (prevalence of high constraint) and a local maximum of zero (a small group completely disconnected from politics).

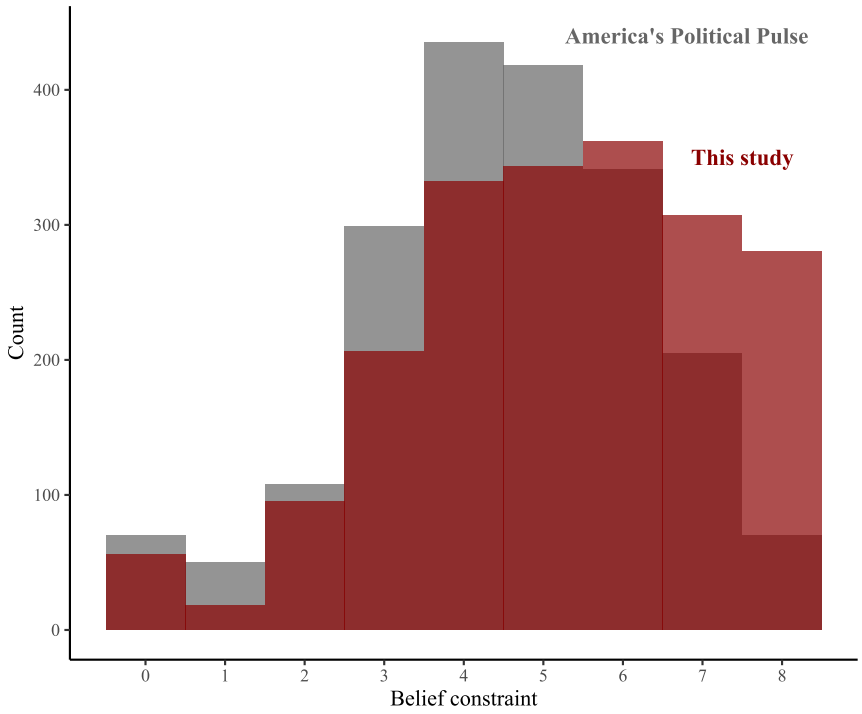

Figure 4: Respondents' Belief Constraint: Compared Distributions

Measuring Predictions

The ability to predict other's beliefs is the focal point of the second study. In the experiment, respondents were asked to predict unobserved beliefs on *student debt relief* and *ceasefire in Gaza*. These questions appeared on the same screen as the vignette (see section on full wording). Given that respondents were evaluating ideological as well as non-ideological vignettes, we can directly compare their predictions for the two (see Figure 5 and Figure 6).

Finally, respondents perceive liberal positions as more prevalent than conservative positions. This does not mean that they are more knowledgeable about liberal positions. Respondents just assumed that most people would want immediate ceasefire in Gaza or student debt relief. They predict liberal beliefs even in cases when the profile is predominantly centrist or when all positions are as likely to be conservative as liberal (ideologically not aligned). Despite this skewness, about two-thirds of predictions are in the conservative direction when exposed to a conservative profile.

Explaining why this might be the case goes beyond the scope of this study. There are, however, at least two explanations that might be considered in future research. It is possible that: 1) liberal positions on selected issues are better known, whereas conservative positions are somewhat less clear or that 2) conservatives are perceived to be less opinionated and aligned in beliefs. Whereas the first possibility is associated purely with issues at question, the second would have broader implications for the current research on ideology. As indicated by other recent and forthcoming research (Gidron 2022; Cely 2024), there is asymmetry in belief organization observed in the European context. The future research in the United States might give this more scrutiny.

This asymmetry, however, does not endanger the validity of the main argument. That posits that ability to predict beliefs (sophistication) is necessary to explain heightened animosity between liberals and conservatives. Although less-sophisticated might be convinced that liberal beliefs are more prevalent, highly sophisticated predict 'correct' (ideologically aligned) beliefs for profiles of ideologues. This asymmetry would be worrying if sophisticated would be more prevalent in one group rather than the other. But those able to correctly predict beliefs are as common among conservatives (*64.6 %*) and liberals (*63.1 %*). Nevertheless, the bias among less sophisticated is an interesting avenue for future research.

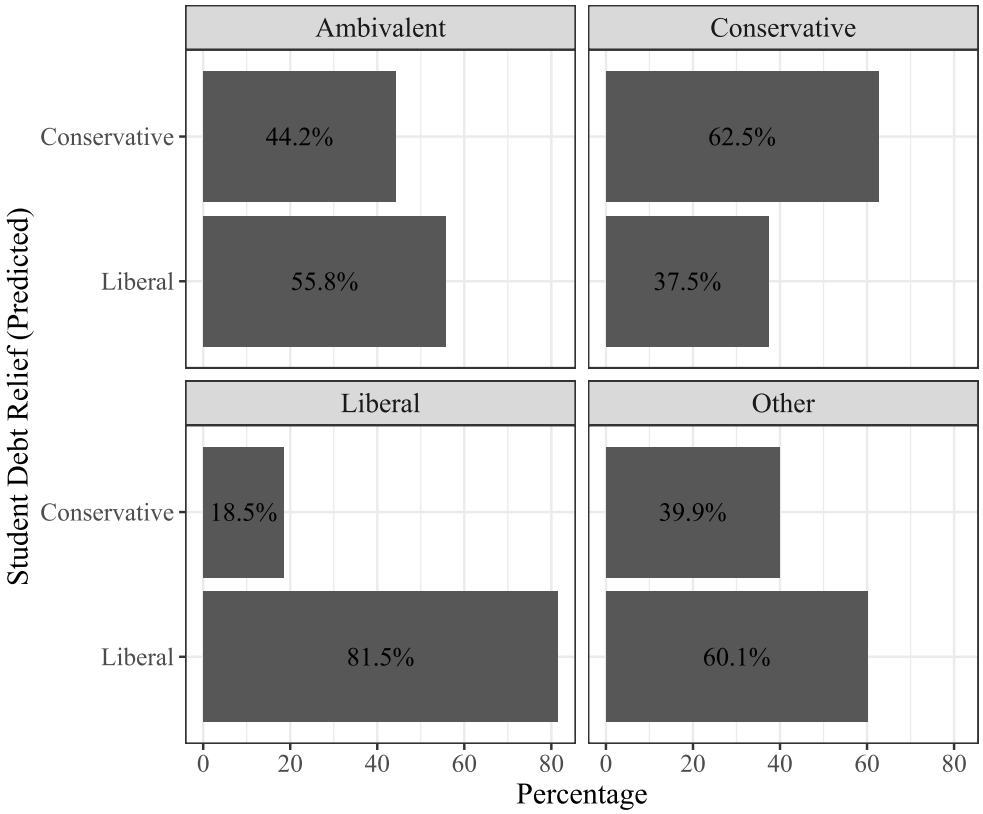

Figure 5: Predicting Position on Student Debt Relief

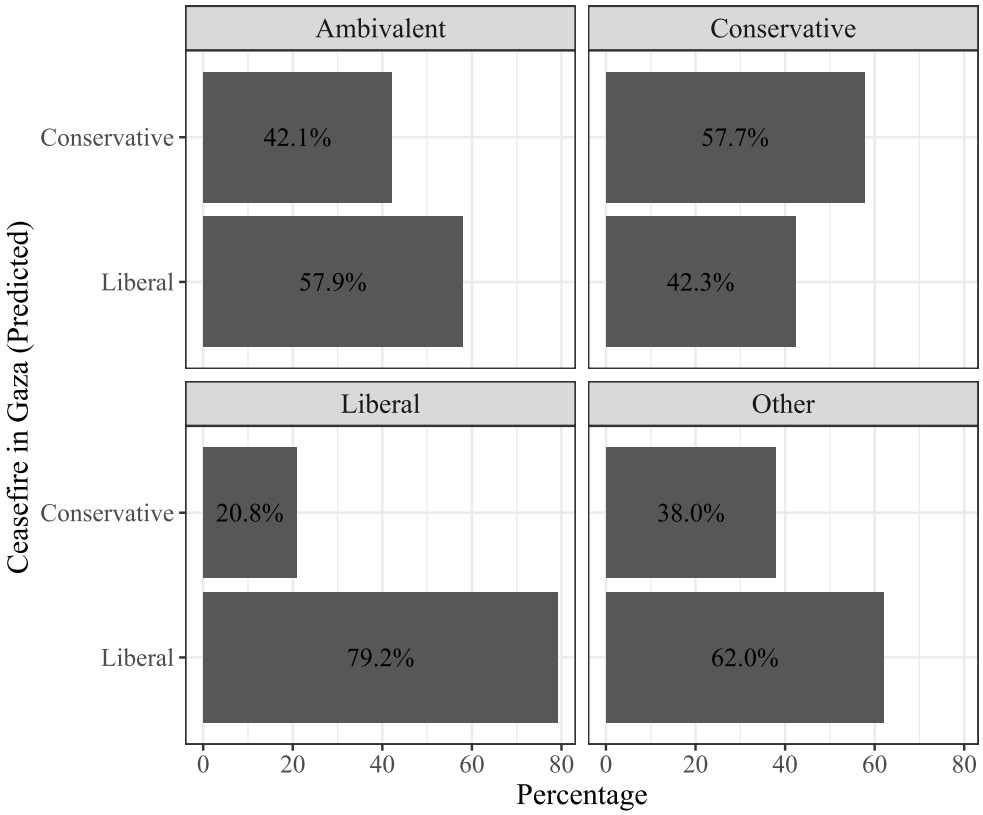

Figure 6: Predicting Position on Ceasefire in Gaza

In addition to mapping what beliefs respondent predicted, I asked them to asssess how certain they were when making their prediction. I asked: `How certain are you in the prediction of beliefs that were not revealed?` Respondent answered on a scale ranging from 0 to 100 %. Average reported certainty for the four types of vignettes are summarized in Figure 7.

Given that vignettes revealed only limited information (policy attitudes) and explicitly mentioned that some other information is hidden, there were only small differences in reported certainty. Nevertheless, taking the ambivalent profile as a baseline, *conservative* profiles were estimated with *6.1 %* (CI = 5.2 - 7) higher certainty and *liberal* profiles with *8.3 %* (CI = 7.4 - 9.2) higher certainty. The differences in reported certainty for liberals and conservatives mirror the uncertainty in guesses of unobserved attitudes. Additionally, respondents seemed aware of their uncertainty, reporting rather low average levels of certainty with relatively minor differences across experimental vignettes.

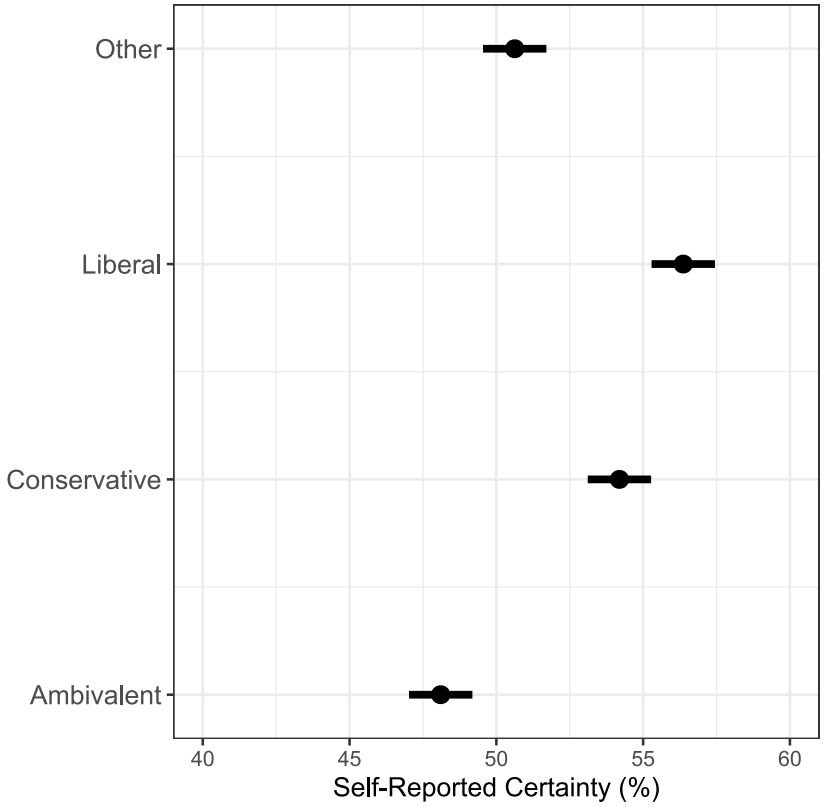

Figure 7: Reported Certainty in Predictions
Note: *This prediction is based on respondent fixed effects.*

Models in Tabular Form

Weak and Strong Disagreement

	Feeling Thermometer		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	68.97	67.41 – 70.52	<0.001
Strong	-9.09	-9.69 – -8.49	<0.001
Weak	-2.49	-3.30 – -1.68	<0.001
Observations	4562		
R2 / R2 adjusted	0.219 / 0.219		

Table 3: The Effects of Two Types of Disagreement on Animosity

	Feeling Thermometer		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	56.27	54.86 – 57.67	<0.001
Weak (reversed)	-2.19	-2.69 – -1.70	<0.001
Observations	4562		
R2 / R2 adjusted	0.021 / 0.020		

Table 4: The Weak Disagreement of Centrist Respondents with Opinionated Vignettes

Figure 2

	Feeling Thermometer		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	65.74	64.58 – 66.91	<0.001
Workplace diversity	-7.33	-8.92 – -5.75	<0.001
Immigration	-9.54	-11.02 – -8.06	<0.001
Racial disparity in homeownership	-5.48	-7.05 – -3.92	<0.001
Sexual harassment	-5.46	-6.97 – -3.94	<0.001
Abortion	-9.23	-10.81 – -7.65	<0.001
Corporate taxes	-7.17	-8.71 – -5.63	<0.001
Legalize marijuana	-7.99	-9.49 – -6.49	<0.001
Gun ownership	-10	-11.48 – -8.51	<0.001
Observations	5983		
R2 / R2 adjusted	0.345 / 0.344		

Table 5: Animosity Due to Disagreement on Individual Policies: **Strong Disagreement**

	Feeling Thermometer		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	45.08	44.23 – 45.93	<0.001
Workplace diversity	-2.2	-4.93 – 0.52	0.113
Immigration	-0.53	-3.07 – 2.01	0.682
Racial disparity in homeownership	-2.4	-5.15 – 0.35	0.087
Sexual harassment	0.48	-2.36 – 3.33	0.74
Abortion	-1	-3.74 – 1.74	0.475
Corporate taxes	-2.24	-5.01 – 0.54	0.114
Legalize marijuana	-0.56	-3.30 – 2.19	0.689
Gun ownership	-1.89	-4.32 – 0.55	0.13
Observations	5983		
R2 / R2 adjusted	0.002 / 0.001		

Table 6: Animosity Due to Disagreement on Individual Policies: **Weak Disagreement**

Figure 3

	Feeling Thermometer		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
Ideologically Aligned (intercept)	71.24	69.42 – 73.05	<0.001
Policy disagreement [1]	-7.93	-10.55 – -5.31	<0.001
Policy disagreement [2]	-20.03	-22.98 – -17.09	<0.001
Policy disagreement [3]	-31.59	-34.64 – -28.54	<0.001
Policy disagreement [4]	-40.04	-43.21 – -36.87	<0.001
Policy disagreement [5]	-46.13	-49.17 – -43.09	<0.001
Policy disagreement [6]	-50.91	-53.81 – -48.00	<0.001
Not Aligned	-18.59	-24.72 – -12.46	<0.001
Policy disagreement [1] × Not Aligned	10.55	2.98 – 18.13	0.006
Policy disagreement [2] × Not Aligned	19.97	12.79 – 27.14	<0.001
Policy disagreement [3] × Not Aligned	24.57	17.19 – 31.95	<0.001
Policy disagreement [4] × Not Aligned	27.23	19.68 – 34.79	<0.001
Policy disagreement [5] × Not Aligned	26.69	18.93 – 34.45	<0.001
Policy disagreement [6] × Not Aligned	31.93	22.60 – 41.25	<0.001
Observations	4498		
R2 / R2 adjusted	0.346 / 0.344		

Table 7: Policy Disagreement for Ideologically Aligned and Others

Figure 4

	Expected Disagreement		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
Conservative: Centrist vignette (intercept)	4.17	4.02 – 4.33	<0.001
Conservative: Conservative vignette	-0.47	-0.68 – -0.25	<0.001
Conservative: Other vignette	0.37	0.16 – 0.58	0.001
Conservative: Liberal vignette	1.01	0.80 – 1.23	<0.001
Liberal: Centrist vignette	0.12	-0.07 – 0.30	0.218
Liberal: Conservative vignette	1.22	0.97 – 1.48	<0.001
Liberal: Other vignette	-0.32	-0.57 – -0.07	0.012
Liberal: Liberal vignette	-1.69	-1.95 – -1.44	<0.001
Random Effects			
σ^2	1.59		
τ_{00} respondent	0.13		
ICC	0.08		
N respondents	1280		
Observations	3725		
Marginal R2 / Conditional R2	0.134 / 0.202		

Table 8: Expected Disagreement For **Liberals, Conservatives**

	Expected Disagreement		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
Centrist (intercept)	4.17	4.08 – 4.26	<0.001
Similar-minded vignette	-0.08	-0.20 – 0.03	0.14
Different-minded vignette	0.44	0.32 – 0.55	<0.001
Random Effects			
σ^2	1.56		
τ_{00} respondent	0.24		
ICC	0.13		
N respondents	1007		
Observations	3343		
Marginal R2 / Conditional R2	0.030 / 0.159		

Table 9: Expected Disagreement For **Non-Ideologues**

Figure 5

	Expected Disagreement		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
More sophisticated x Conservative: Centrist vignette (intercept)	4.27	4.08 – 4.46	<0.001
More sophisticated x Conservative: Conservative vignette	-0.65	-0.91 – -0.40	<0.001
More sophisticated x Conservative: Other vignette	0.46	0.21 – 0.71	<0.001
More sophisticated x Conservative: Liberal vignette	1.36	1.10 – 1.62	<0.001
More sophisticated x Liberal: Centrist vignette	0.12	-0.10 – 0.35	0.277
More sophisticated x Liberal: Conservative vignette	1.72	1.41 – 2.02	<0.001
More sophisticated x Liberal: Other vignette	-0.41	-0.71 – -0.11	0.008
More sophisticated x Liberal: Liberal vignette	-2.36	-2.66 – -2.05	<0.001
Less sophisticated x Conservative: Centrist vignette	-0.27	-0.59 – 0.04	0.092
Less sophisticated x Conservative: Conservative vignette	0.55	0.11 – 0.99	0.014
Less sophisticated x Conservative: Other vignette	-0.26	-0.69 – 0.17	0.232
Less sophisticated x Conservative: Liberal vignette	-0.9	-1.33 – -0.47	<0.001
Less sophisticated x Liberal: Centrist vignette	0	-0.37 – 0.38	0.995
Less sophisticated x Liberal: Conservative vignette	-1.42	-1.93 – -0.90	<0.001
Less sophisticated x Liberal: Other vignette	0.25	-0.25 – 0.76	0.327
Less sophisticated x Liberal: Liberal vignette	1.77	1.26 – 2.28	<0.001
Random Effects			
σ^2	1.48		
τ_{00} respondent	0.14		
ICC	0.09		
N respondents	1280		
Observations	3725		
Marginal R2 / Conditional R2	0.186 / 0.257		

Table 10: Expected Disagreement by Ideology and Sophistication: **Liberals, Conservatives**

	Expected Disagreement		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
More sophisticated: Centrist vignette (Intercept)	4.28	4.15 – 4.41	<0.001
Less sophisticated: Centrist vignette	-0.22	-0.40 – -0.04	0.018
More sophisticated: Similar-minded vignette	-0.26	-0.42 – -0.10	0.001
More sophisticated: Different-minded vignette	0.66	0.50 – 0.82	<0.001
Less sophisticated: Similar-minded vignette	0.33	0.11 – 0.55	0.003
Less sophisticated: Different-minded vignette	-0.47	-0.69 – -0.25	<0.001
Random Effects			
σ^2	1.52		
τ_{00} respondent	0.24		
ICC	0.13		
N respondents	1007		
Observations	3343		
Marginal R2 / Conditional R2	0.056 / 0.184		

Table 11: Expected Disagreement by Ideology and Sophistication: **Others**

Robustness

Partisan Subpopulations

When evaluating the impact of ideological structures, some may contend that ideological alignment influences animosity because it signals affiliation with the opposing political side. Although symbolic aspects of belief systems, such as partisanship (Orr, Fowler, and Huber 2023), may never be fully disentangled from operational components (beliefs), we can replicate the analysis across subpopulations defined by partisanship. Notably, even self-identified Independents, who do not symbolically align with either party, often align their beliefs with one of the two dominant ideologies (Mason 2018). This study aims to explore potential heterogeneity in effects across three partisan subpopulations.

Using data from the first study, I focus on respondents who identified as Republican (509, or *25.5%*), Democrat (825, *41.3%*), or Independent (517, *25.9%*). Respondents who identified as 'Other' or were unsure (149 respondents) are excluded from this analysis. To emphasize the most relevant information (the difference in ratings between similar-minded and different-minded counterparts), I categorize the number of policy issues on which views do not align as either less than three (similar-minded) or more than four (different-minded). This categorization ensures that both groups have sufficient observations. The results are visualized in Figure 8, and the full regression table is presented in Table 12.

First, the pattern of shifting (dis)likes is relatively consistent across the three subpopulations. The difference in ratings between different-minded and similar-minded counterparts is most pronounced among those who are ideologically aligned. Specifically, this difference is *48.8 points* for ideologically aligned Democrats, *32.1 points* for ideologically aligned Republicans, and *39 points* for ideologically aligned Independents. Even among Independents, who report no partisan allegiances, the substance of ideological differences remains striking. Conversely, the difference narrows among Others, with the gap being *21.9 points* for Democrats, *18.8 points* for Republicans, and *21 points* for Independents.

The findings also suggest that the ideological significance of substantive agreement or disagreement varies more for Democrats than for other subpopulations. There are fewer statistically significant differences between ideologues and others among Republicans and Independents. While this may partly be due to smaller sample sizes, it also highlights greater heterogeneity in responses among those not aligned in these groups. The asymmetry in the impact of ideological structures corresponds with the varying levels of difficulty in predicting beliefs, as discussed in the section Measuring Predictions.

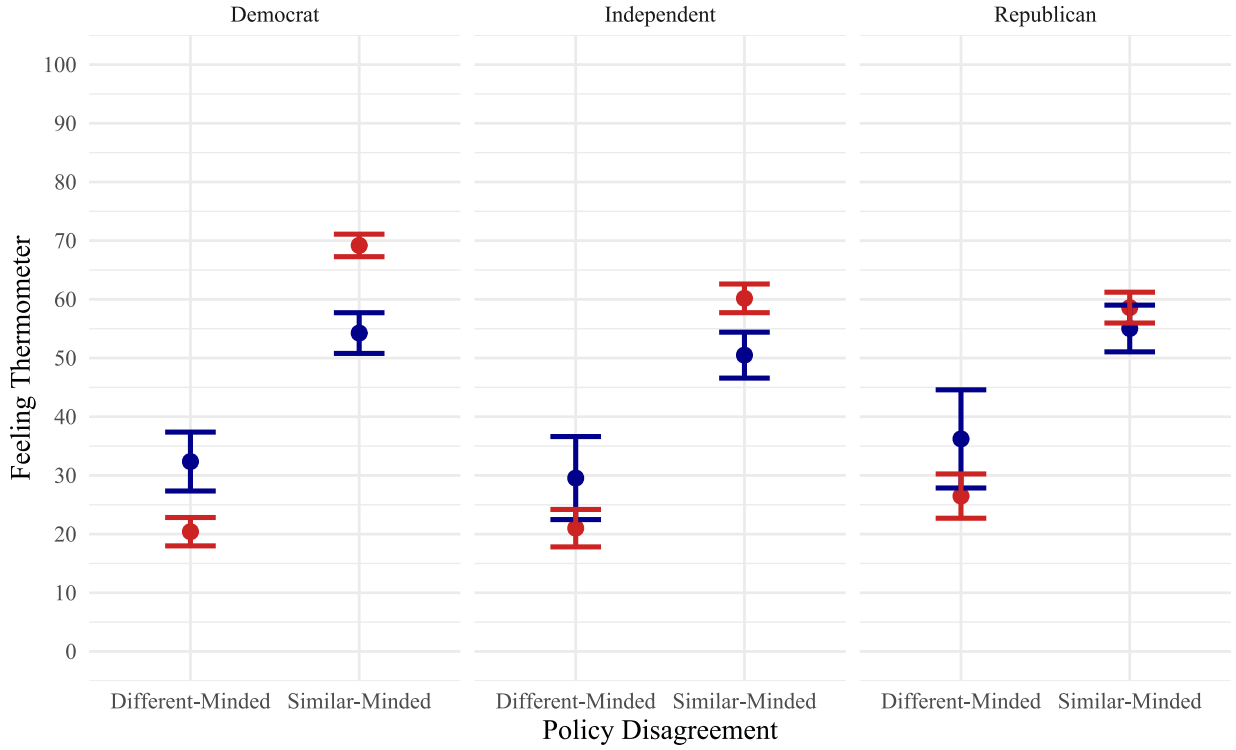

Figure 8: Policy Disagreement for Ideologically Aligned and Others by Partisanship
Note: *The average feelings of animosity for Others are in blue color and Ideologically Aligned in red.*

	Feeling Thermometer		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
Aligned x Democrat: Different-minded vignette (Intercept)	20.41	17.99 – 22.83	<0.001
Aligned x Democrat: Similar-minded vignette	48.78	45.70 – 51.86	<0.001
Aligned x Independent: Different-minded vignette	0.6	-3.34 – 4.54	0.765
Aligned x Independent: Similar-minded vignette	-9.62	-14.60 – -4.63	<0.001
Aligned x Republican: Different-minded vignette	6.07	1.61 – 10.52	0.008
Aligned x Republican: Similar-minded vignette	-16.66	-22.25 – -11.07	<0.001
Not Aligned x Democrat: Different-minded vignette	11.95	6.58 – 17.32	<0.001
Not Aligned x Democrat: Similar-minded vignette	-26.89	-33.42 – -20.35	<0.001
Not Aligned x Independent: Different-minded vignette	-3.41	-12.75 – 5.92	0.473
Not Aligned x Independent: Similar-minded vignette	8.67	-2.10 – 19.44	0.114
Not Aligned x Republican: Different-minded vignette	-2.21	-12.74 – 8.32	0.681
Not Aligned x Republican: Similar-minded vignette	13.58	1.49 – 25.68	0.028
Observations	3124		
R2 / R2 adjusted	0.353 / 0.351		

Table 12: Regression Table: Policy Disagreement for Ideologically Aligned and Others by Partisanship

Ideology and Animosity: Examination of Patterns of Responses

In the first study, I present several analyses connecting two characteristics of ideologues (opinionatedness and belief alignment) to animosity. However, because previous literature has identified several groups of people driving political animosity—not just partisans, as analyzed before, but also those deeply involved in politics (Krupnikov and Ryan 2022) or affected by social sorting (Mason 2015)—it is useful to visually compare the patterns in observations to trend lines to check for any influential groups or outliers.

Observations of belief alignment (Figure 9) are incorporated into the trends shown in Figure 3 of the main paper. In the case of belief alignment, there are no irregular patterns worth considering. There is a higher number of ideologues, but this is evident from the descriptive analysis in the main paper. The first and third quadrants are less populated, suggesting a negative relationship. Dispersion is higher among non-ideologues, as would be expected based on the weaker effect of disagreement in this group.

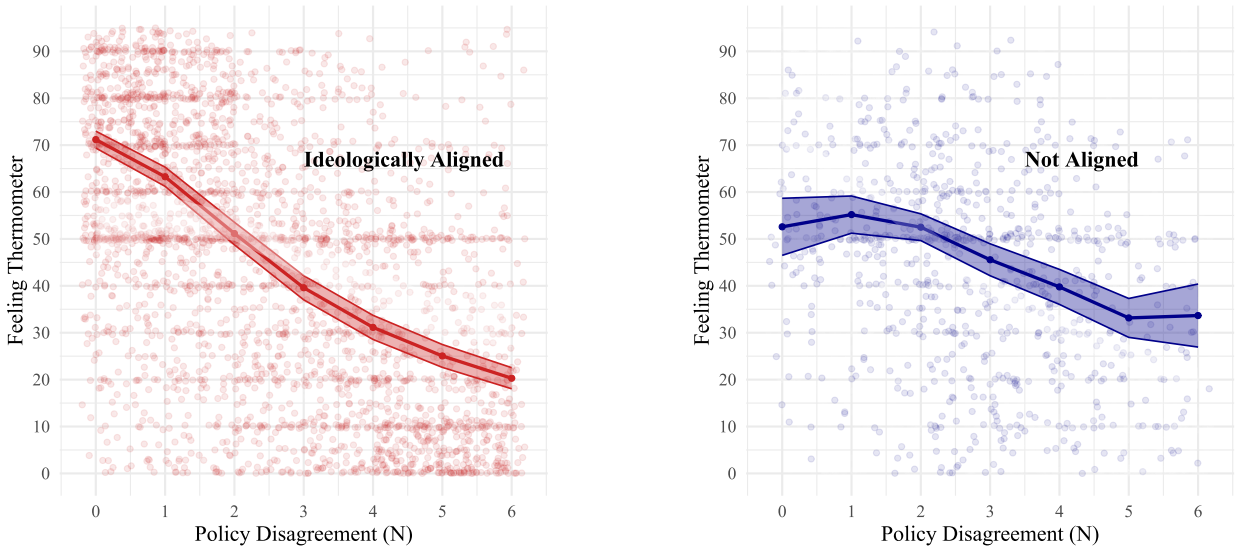

Figure 9: Observed Animosity in Individual Instances of Policy Disagreement: Alignment

For strong and weak disagreement, I distinguish between instances of partial disagreement and agreement (see Figure 10). To ensure comparability, I limit the analysis to a maximum of four instances of disagreement (half of the displayed views), as the number of centrist attitudes in the vignettes was also capped at four

There are slightly fewer cases of no strong disagreement compared to no weak disagreement. Additionally, while some individuals converge toward the middle value in situations of (limited) strong disagreement, many others express stronger dislike toward their counterparts, as indicated by values below 50. Thus, although strong disagreement often elicits hate, particularly in limited contexts where some shared agreement exists, many individuals merely lose sympathy for their counterparts rather than descending into outright animosity.

In the case of weak disagreement, there is a notable decline in the number of respondents who reported very favorable feelings toward their counterparts (a value of 100 on the feeling thermometer). These individuals could be opinionated respondents who rated their like-minded counterparts favorably but whose evaluations declined when exposed to more ambivalent, centrist vignettes. On the other hand, the group of opinionated respondents with neutral evaluations of both like-minded and centrist counterparts remains more or less the same in size. This likely represents a group of somewhat opinionated yet predominantly ambivalent centrists who are untroubled by individuals entirely ambivalent about politics.

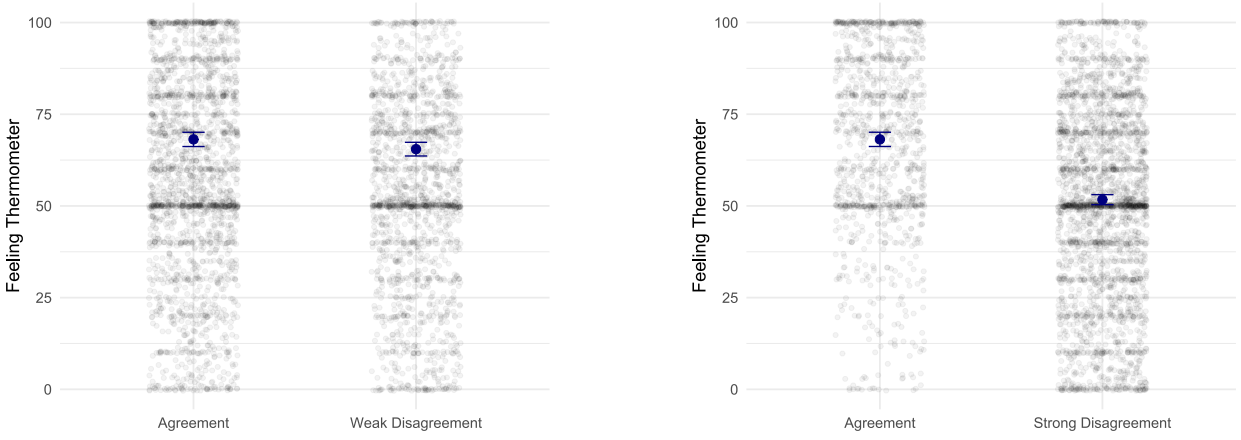

Figure 10: Observed Animosity in Individual Instances of Policy Disagreement: Opinionatedness

Finally, let us examine how much the effects of disagreement depend on affinity toward similar-minded groups. Although this study's primary interest is in political animosity, the degree to which we like our in-group influences how strongly we can hate dissimilar others. Therefore, I categorized respondents into three groups: those with high in-group affinity, who particularly liked their similar-minded counterparts; those with medium affinity; and those with the lowest in-group affinity. For this purpose, I used terciles based on feelings toward vignettes that matched respondents' beliefs exactly. This categorization was not possible for all respondents, as not all were exposed to vignettes that precisely matched their beliefs. As a result, I employed a subset of 638 respondents, which somewhat limits the statistical power available for this analysis. The results are depicted in Figure 11.

For weak disagreement, I am unable to detect any significant effects. However, the direction and magnitude of these effects are generally similar to those presented in the main analysis. There is, however, noteworthy heterogeneity when it comes to strong disagreement. The observed effects largely replicate for respondents with high or medium levels of in-group affinity. In contrast, in the group least inclined to like their similar-minded counterparts, strong disagreement has a limited effect on animosity. There are several possible explanations for this heterogeneity. In the context of this study, however, belief structures provide an intuitive explanation for why opinionated respon-

dents might not feel colder toward people with whom they disagree more. If their beliefs are not aligned along the dominant liberal-conservative continuum, even opinion divergence on four out of eight issues may not reveal much about another person's worldview.

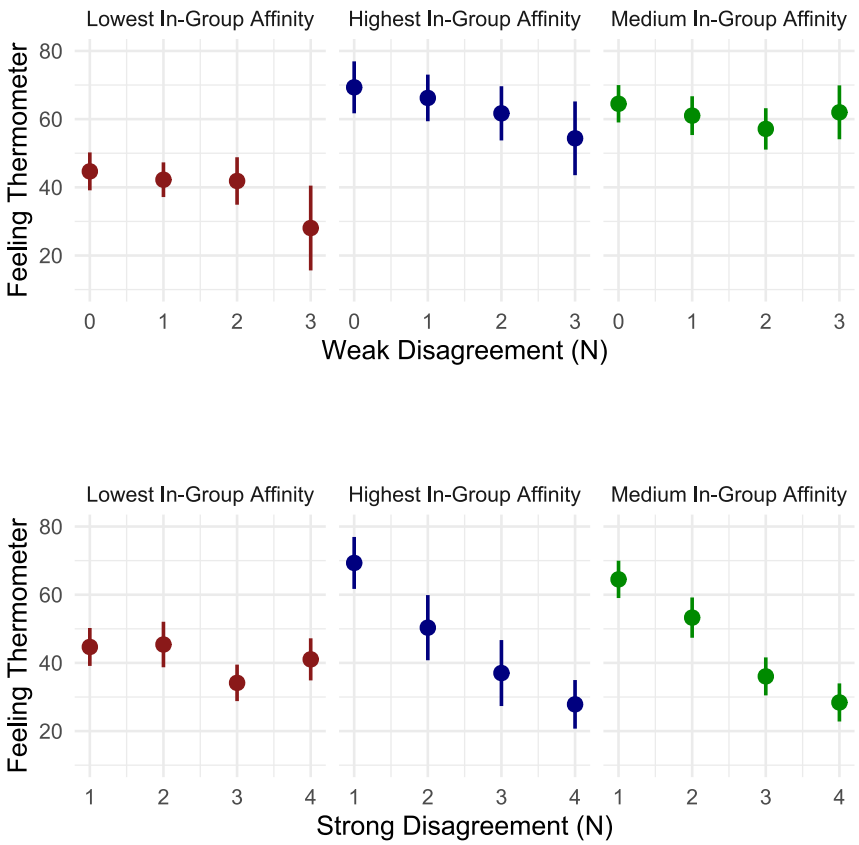

Figure 11: Disagreement and Animosity: Respondents with Different Baselines

Informational Equivalence

When drawing inferences about a specific variable in survey experimental design, researchers must ensure that the background information of the experimental treatments is balanced so that they differ only in the variable of interest (Dafoe, Zhang, and Caughey 2018). The previous section discussed the role of partisanship in influencing the studied relationship. Ideologues may exhibit distinct behavioral traits compared to the general population, particularly in their level of political engagement and the strength of their convictions (Converse 1964; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008). Some may argue that respondents react differently to ideological counterparts because they perceive them as more engaged or extreme, rather than due to a clear perception of disagreement on both observed and unobserved issues.

To assess how experimental vignettes were perceived in terms of extremity and activism, I incor-

porated two specific questions. The perceived extremity of beliefs was measured with the question: `Would you describe this person's views as extreme?`, using a seven-point scale (`Strongly agree - Strongly disagree`). Perceived activism was assessed with the question: `Would you describe this person as a fervent activist?`, also using a seven-point scale (`Strongly agree - Strongly disagree`). The scales were reversed so that higher values correspond to a vignette being perceived as more activist or extreme.

To explore how these variables may have influenced the studied relationship, I compared perceived activism (see Table 13) and extremity (see Table 14) across vignettes. The results indicate that the vignettes were indeed perceived differently, but none of these differences align with the divide based on belief structures.

First, there is an asymmetry in perceived activism, skewed towards liberals. On average, respondents perceive conservative vignettes as only slightly more activist than centrist ones. Perceived activism increases with more liberal beliefs, with liberal vignettes being seen as the most activist. This outcome has some face validity, as most of the issues in the vignettes (e.g., energy policy, health insurance, gun regulations) are typically associated with the Democratic Party.

Second, compared to centrist vignettes, all opinionated vignettes are perceived as more extreme in their views. This result is expected, as centrist vignettes largely contain middle-of-the-road positions on issues. However, there are no significant differences across the other three experimental conditions. Ideologues are not seen as more extreme simply because their beliefs are organized into recognizable structures. Overall, these findings suggest a limited role for perceived behavioral differences in the main argument of this paper.

	Perceived activism		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
Centrist vignette (Intercept)	3.62	3.56 – 3.68	<0.001
Conservative vignette	0.25	0.18 – 0.32	<0.001
Not Aligned vignette	0.41	0.33 – 0.48	<0.001
Liberal vignette	0.67	0.60 – 0.75	<0.001
Random Effects			
σ^2	1.41		
τ_{00} respondent	0.46		
ICC	0.25		
N respondents	2000		
Observations	8000		
Marginal R2 / Conditional R2	0.031 / 0.271		

Table 13: Average Perceived Activism Across Vignette Types

	Perceived belief extremity		
Predictors	Estimates	CI	p
Centrist vignette (Intercept)	3.66	3.60 – 3.72	<0.001
Conservative vignette	0.46	0.38 – 0.54	<0.001
Not Aligned vignette	0.37	0.29 – 0.45	<0.001
Liberal vignette	0.42	0.34 – 0.50	<0.001
Random Effects			
σ^2	1.71		
τ_{00} respondent	0.32		
ICC	0.16		
N caseid	2000		
Observations	7999		
Marginal R2 / Conditional R2	0.016 / 0.173		

Table 14: Average Perceived Belief Extremity Across Vignette Types

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