

# Cultural Theory and Cultural Cognition

## And Some Assorted Research Projects

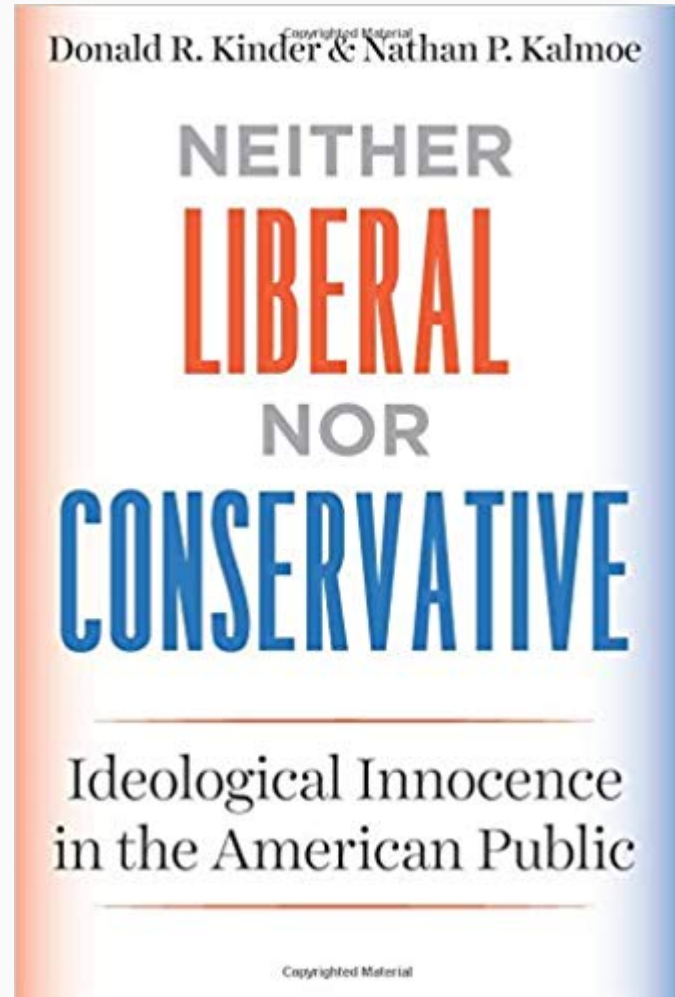
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Department of Political Science  
College of Charleston

MES Core Seminar  
January 31st, 2019

What the hell is wrong with people OR  
what does the public think about policy  
issues?

# Public Opinion

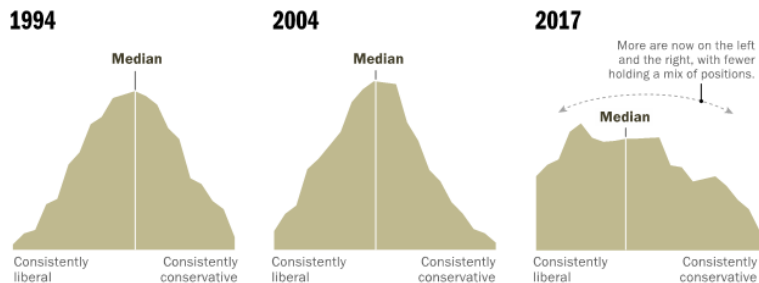
- In general, the public is **not** consistently liberal or conservative
- *The American Voter* (1960)
- *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992)
- **Only the most knowledgeable about politics tend to be ideologically consistent**



# Public Opinion: Pew

## A declining share of Americans holds a mix of liberal and conservative views

*Distribution of the public on a 10-item scale of political values*

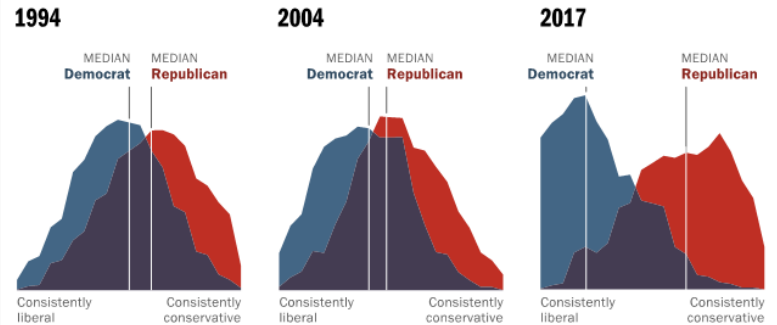


Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see methodology).  
Source: Survey conducted June 8-18, 2017.

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## Democrats and Republicans more ideologically divided than in the past

*Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values*



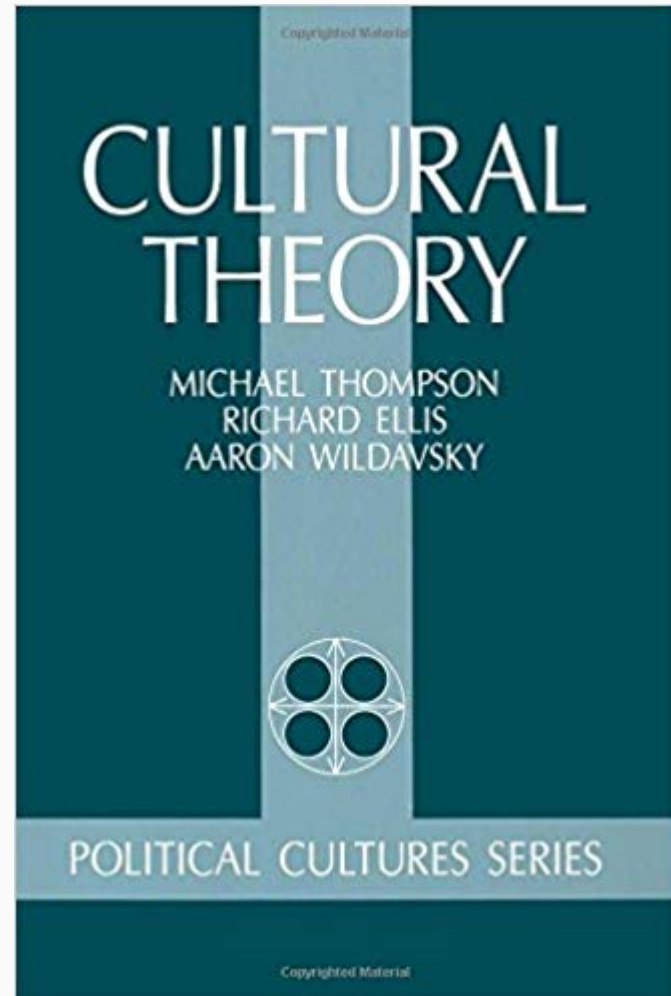
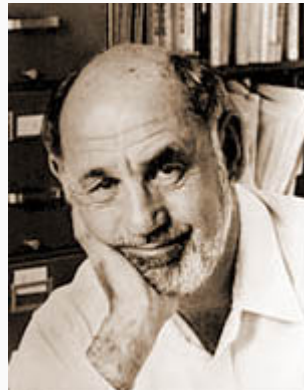
Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see methodology). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents; the red area of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple.

Source: Survey conducted June 8-18, 2017.

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# Moving beyond one dimension of ideology

# Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky



# Cultural Theory

Values based on cultural bias, social relations, and ways of life

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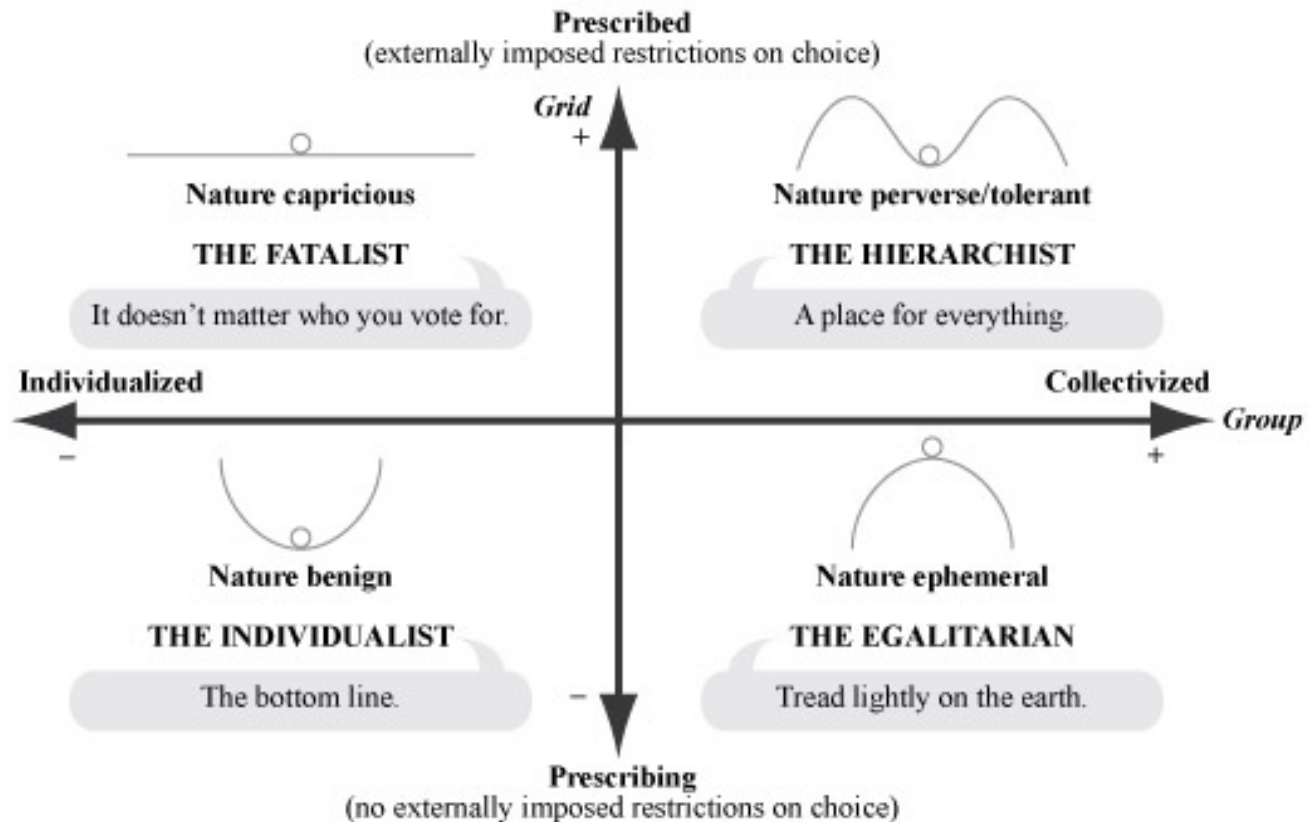
- Cultural bias: *Shared values and beliefs*
- Social relations: *Patterns of interpersonal relations*
- Ways of life: *Viable combinations of social relations and cultural bias*
- Ways of life (cultural types) are captured by two cross cutting dimensions; grid and group
  - Grid: *Degree that an individual's life is limited by externally imposed prescriptions; social regulation*
  - Group: *Degree that an individual is incorporated into bounded units*

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  - Grid: *Degree that an individual's life is limited by externally imposed prescriptions; social regulation*
  - Group: *Degree that an individual is incorporated into bounded units*
- *Combining the grid and group dimensions produce four viable ways of life, or cultural types*

# Four Rationalities



Source: Schwarz, M. and M. Thompson, 1990, *Divided We Stand: Redefining Politics, Technology and Social Choice*, p. 7.

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- Individualistic: *low grid, low group*
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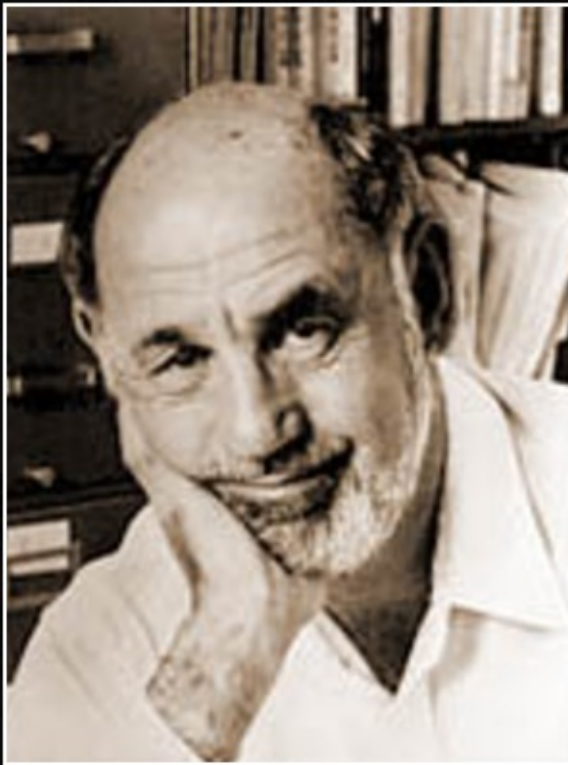
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- Individualistic: *low grid, low group*
  - Free competition among individuals and few group constraints (e.g., entrepreneurs)
- Fatalistic: *high grid, low group*
  - Little or no group attachments, yet choices are constrained by external forces (e.g., undocumented workers)

# Cultural Theory

*Individualists, being nonprescriptive and anticolonialist, prefer minimal economic and social regulation. Egalitarians, combining nonprescription with collective decision, prefer strong economic but weak social regulation. And adherents of hierarchy, joining hard group boundaries to heavy prescription, desire strong social and economic regulation. Presumably, students of cultural theory would not be surprised at a U.S. president who (combining market individualism with social hierarchy, like his party) urges compulsory urine tests to detect drug users*

-- Wildavsky, *Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation*, 1987



The environmentalist's dream is an egalitarian society based on: rejection of economic growth, a smaller population, eating lower on the food chain, consuming a lot less, and sharing a much lower level of resources much more equally.

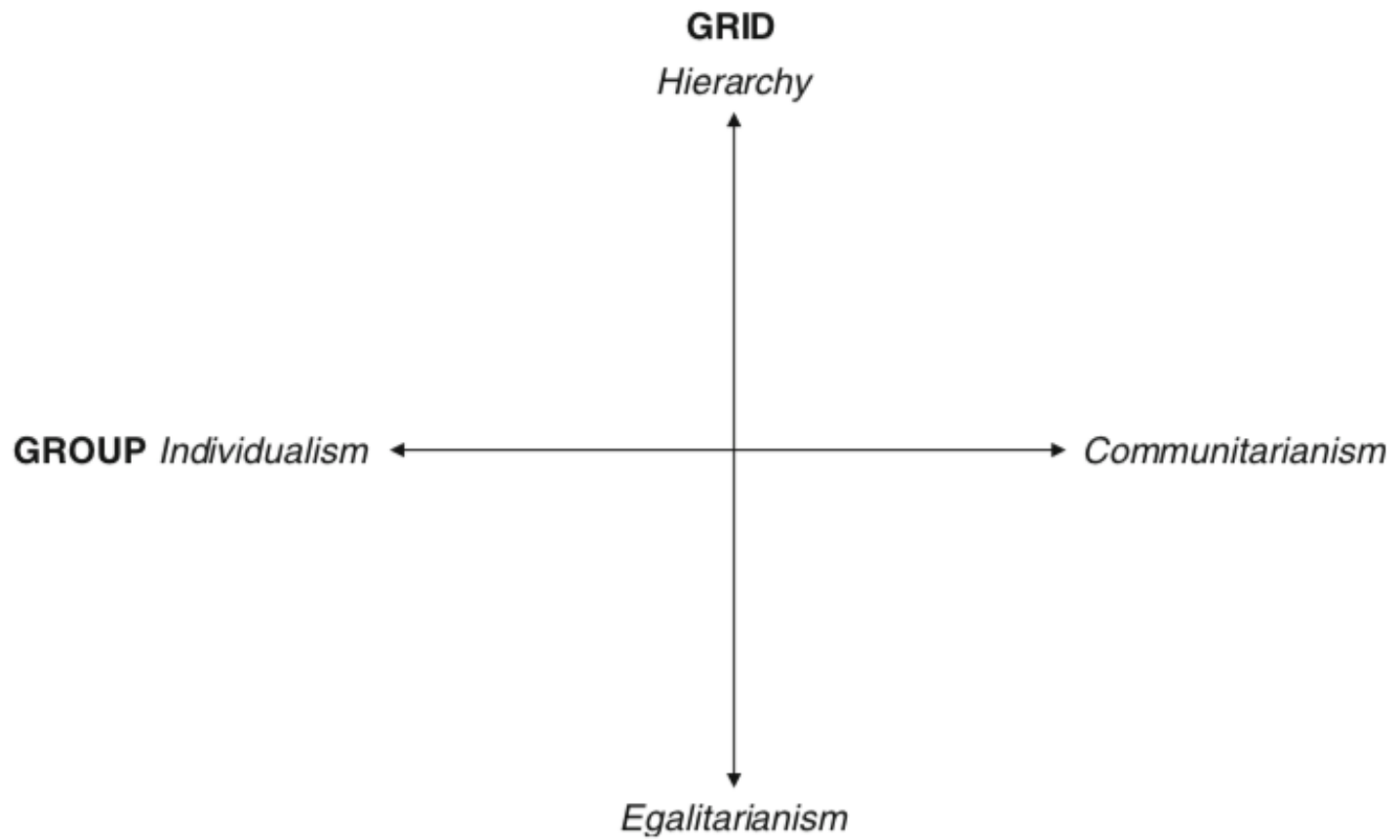
— Aaron Wildavsky —

**AZ** QUOTES

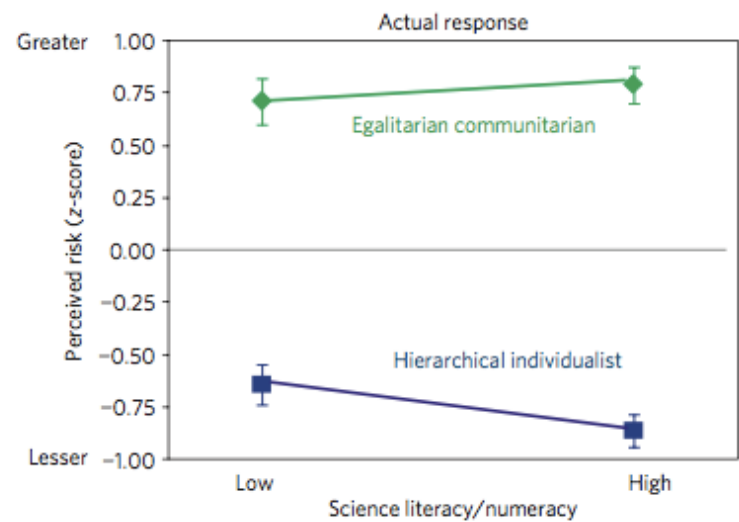
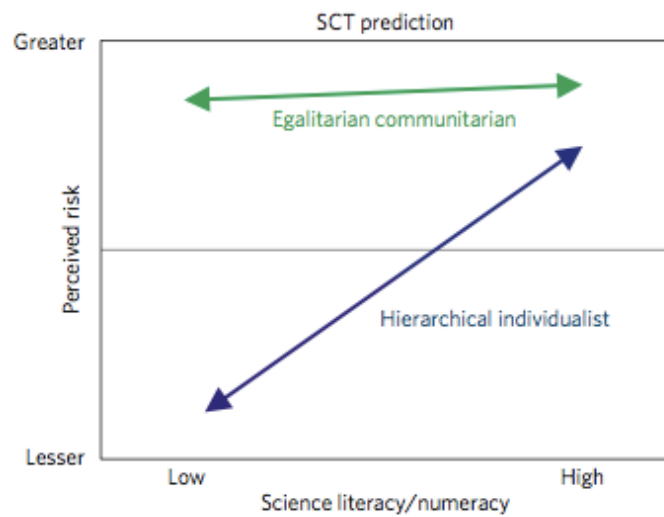
# Cultural Cognition

*Individuals, as a result of a complex of psychological mechanisms, tend to form perceptions of societal risks that cohere with values characteristic of groups with which they identify*

-- Kahan et al. (2012)



'How much risk do you believe climate change poses to human health, safety or prosperity?'

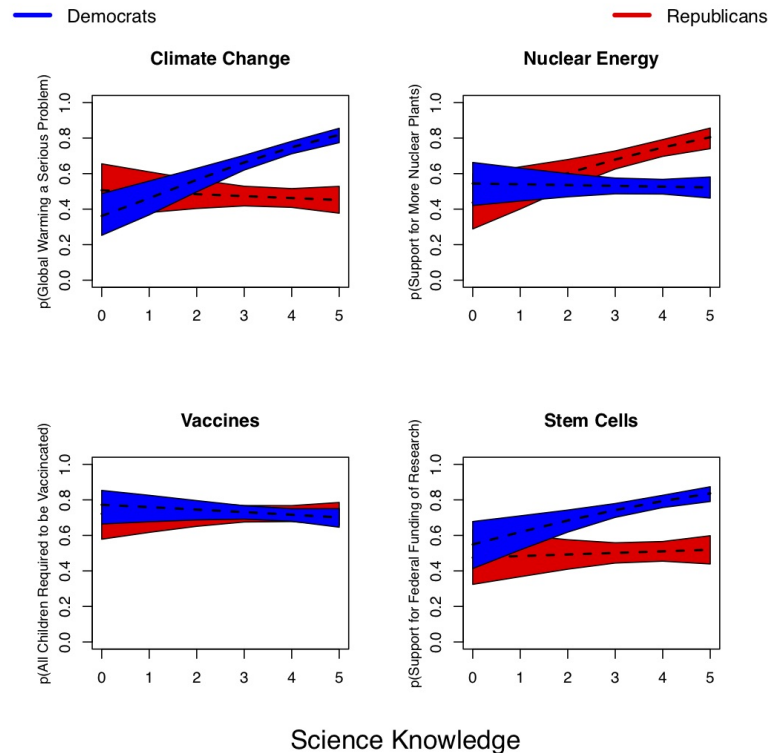


# Some Research Projects

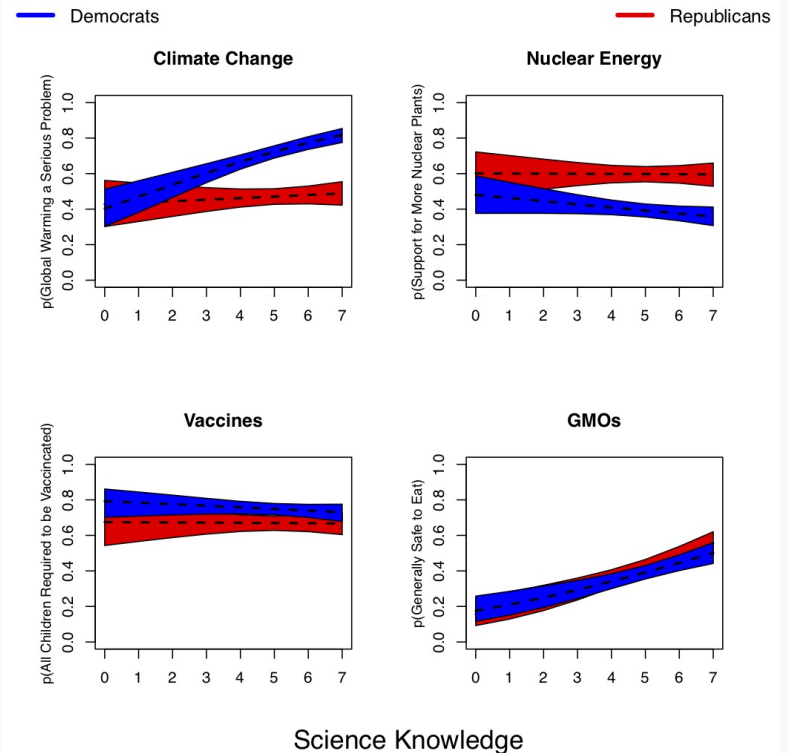


# Partisan Polarization and Science

2009



2014



# Environmental Policymaking Book

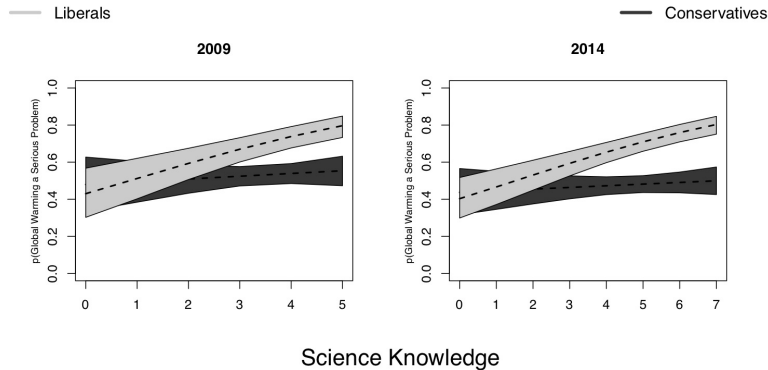
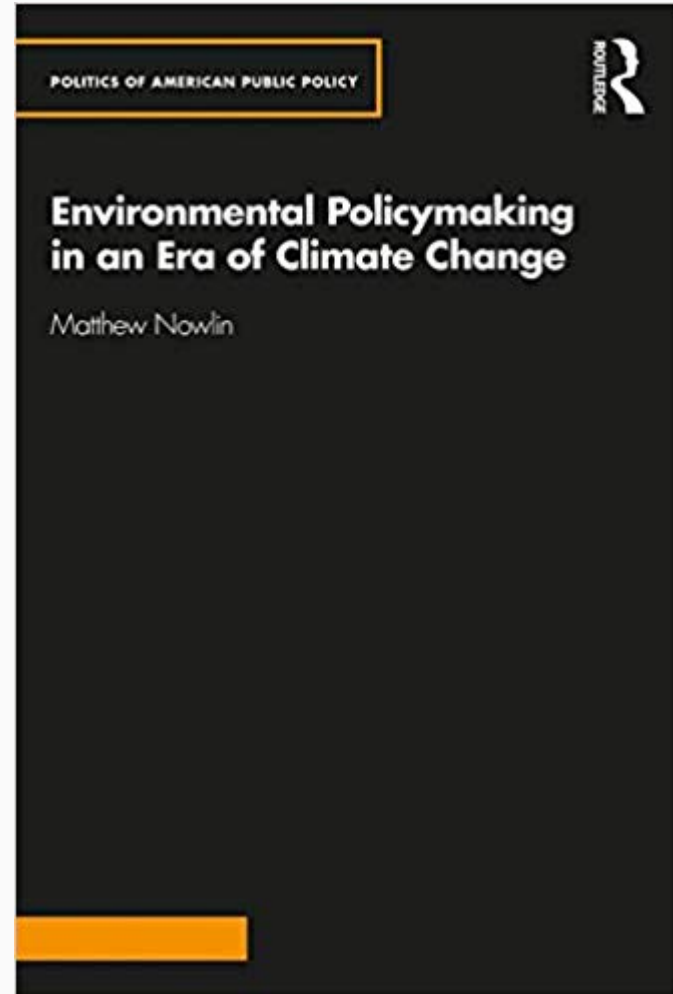


Table 4.1: Core Values and Environmental Values

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
NEP Scale (more environmentalist)	
Hierarchy	-0.013 (0.029)
Egalitarianism	0.169*** (0.025)
Individualism	-0.140*** (0.029)
Fatalism	-0.091*** (0.027)
Ideology (more conservative)	-0.165*** (0.025)
Partisanship (more Republican)	-0.045** (0.022)
Observations	819
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.302

Note: Controlling for age, gender, ethnicity, education, and income  
 Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01



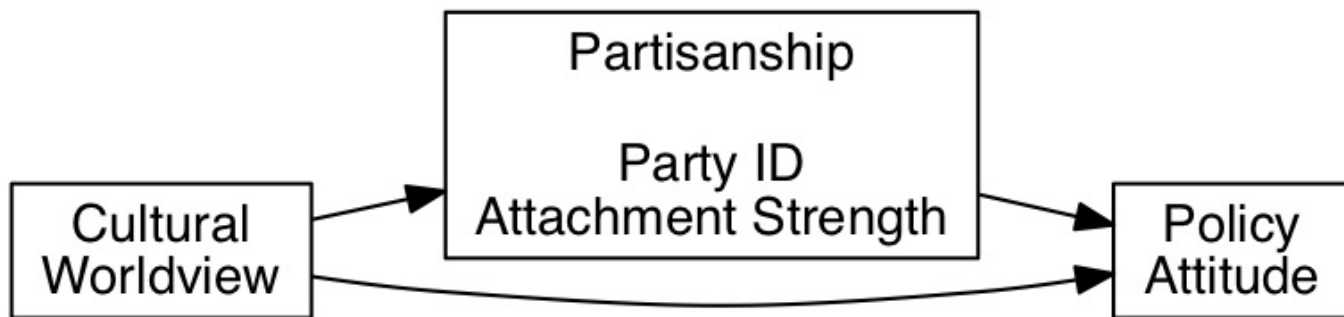


Table 3: OLS Estimates of Carbon Tax Support: Post Experiment by Cultural Cognition Types

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Egal-Comm	Hierarch-Indiv
	(1)	(2)
General Fund	-0.107 (0.203)	0.147 (0.160)
Reduce Budget Deficit	0.167 (0.200)	0.403** (0.162)
Renewable Technology	-0.141 (0.200)	0.237 (0.168)
Tax Rebate	0.214 (0.196)	0.561*** (0.164)

Join us: Environmental Policy Research  
Group (EPRG)

Questions?