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Friday, January 1, 2016

## Parallel universes

### Differences in Sensitivity to Deviance Partly Explain Ideological Divides in Social Policy Support

Tyler Okimoto &amp; Dena Gromet

*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, forthcoming

#### Abstract:

We propose that political differences in social policy support may be partly driven by the tendency for conservatives to show greater sensitivity to deviance than liberals, even among targets lacking social or functional relevance. In 3 studies, participants were shown geometric figures and were asked to identify the extent to which they were “triangles” (or circles, squares, etc.). More conservative participants reported greater differentiation between perfect and imperfect shapes than more liberal participants, indicating greater sensitivity to deviance. Moreover, shape differentiation partly accounted for the relationship between political ideology and social policy, partially mediating the link between conservatism and harsher punishment of wrongdoers (Studies 1 and 4), less support for public aid for disadvantaged groups (Study 2), and less financial backing for policies that benefit marginalized groups in society (Study 3). This effect was specific to policies that targeted deviant groups (Study 3) and who were not too highly deviant (Study 4). Results suggest that, in addition to commonly cited affective and motivational reactions to deviant actors, political differences in social policy may also be driven by conservatives’ greater cognitive propensity to distinguish deviance.

### The Hostile Audience: The Effect of Access to Broadband Internet on Partisan Affect

Yphtach Lelkes, Gaurav Sood &amp; Shanto Iyengar

*American Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming

#### Abstract:

Over the last two decades, as the number of media choices available to consumers has exploded, so too have worries over self-selection into media audiences. Some fear greater apathy, others heightened polarization. In this article, we shed light on the latter possibility. We identify the impact of access to broadband Internet on affective polarization by exploiting differences in broadband availability brought about by variation in state right-of-way regulations (ROW). We merge state-level regulation data with county-level broadband penetration data and a large-N sample of survey data from 2004 to 2008 and find that access to broadband Internet increases partisan hostility. The effect occurs in both years and is stable across levels of political interest. We also find that access to broadband Internet boosts partisans’ consumption of partisan media, a likely cause of increased polarization.

### The View from Up Here: Higher-Status Individuals’ Beliefs about Their Own Objectivity Exacerbate Political Division

Kristjen Lundberg, Keith Payne &amp; Aaron Kay

University of North Carolina Working Paper, January 2016

#### Abstract:

Unsurprisingly, opposing views on income inequality have been accompanied by a lack of compromise on how to address the rising gap between rich and poor. Naïve realism, the belief that one sees the world objectively and that contrary views are

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## About the Author

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biased or uninformed, may be one cause of this gridlock. We specifically hypothesize that subjective socioeconomic status (SSES) is associated with an asymmetry in naïve realism. Across three studies, using both measured and manipulated SSES, we show that higher (versus lower) SSES individuals were more likely to perceive the redistributive policy preferences of those who disagreed with them as biased. Importantly, we also demonstrate that higher SSES individuals showed a greater tendency to exclude contrary views in a democratic voting process. Together, these data suggest that higher SSES individuals are more likely to believe that they see the world objectively and to discount the (ostensibly biased) views of others.

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### **Institution of Nomination and the Policy Ideology of Primary Electorates**

Seth Hill

*Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, Fall 2015, Pages 461-487

#### **Abstract:**

Many hypothesize that the divergence between Democratic and Republican members of Congress is partly attributable to partisan primary elections. Yet most empirical evidence on the influence of primary elections finds small to no effect on member behavior. I argue that existing designs that compare members elected out of nomination systems with more open rules of access to members elected out of more closed systems rest on the crucial and untested assumption that more closed institutions lead to more polarized primary electorates. With survey opinions, turnout validated to voter files, and an IRT model of ideology, I characterize the preferences of Democratic and Republican primary electorates and general electorates in each House district in 2010 and 2012. To the extent that there is a relationship between primary ideology and closed primary institution, it is in the direction opposite that hypothesized. I then show that the primary electorate diverges from the general electorate in every House district and even from supporters of the party in the general election in almost every district, which is consistent with a centrifugal influence of primary voters. These results suggest that institution of nomination may not have a large influence on the type of voters who turn out, and that some other feature of nominating contests must be implicated in polarized primary voters.

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### **Do People Naturally Cluster into Liberals and Conservatives?**

Jason Weeden & Robert Kurzban

*Evolutionary Psychological Science*, forthcoming

#### **Abstract:**

Many researchers have attempted to link evolutionary notions to political psychology by proposing a natural tendency for people to cluster into liberals and conservatives across various social and economic opinion domains. We review evidence showing that, in contrast, for the large majority of Americans, racial and economic opinions are only trivially correlated with opinions regarding matters of lifestyle and religious fundamentalism. The key exception is a group that does, in fact, show reasonably robust ideological alignment across diverse domains: whites with high levels of human capital (measured by education and test performance). Further, since the early 1980s, while the US public as a whole has increasingly tended to choose liberal/conservative labels and political parties in line with their issue opinions, substantial increases in cross-issue correlations have occurred only among whites with high levels of human capital. Nonetheless, mass public opinion is not unstructured — it maintains an underlying coherence grounded in domain-specific demographic connections relating to different opinion areas.

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### **The effect of race, partisanship, and income on perceptions of the economy before and after the election of Barack Obama**

Richard Seltzer & Jonathan Wesley Hutto

*Social Science Journal*, forthcoming

#### **Abstract:**

Scholars and practitioners have debated and analyzed the effect of President Obama's election and presidency on the society. This article looks at the impact of the presidency of Barack Obama had on people's perceptions of the economy. We examined this phenomenon using three survey questions about the economy and respondents' own financial situation. These questions, within 53 separate surveys, were asked before the start of the Great Recession in 2008 and through the end of President Obama's first term in 2012. We compare Whites and Blacks, while examining within each race the effects of party identification, income, and whether the respondent came from a high unemployment state. During the last term of President George W. Bush, Whites were more likely than Blacks to have a positive assessment of the economy and their own economic condition compared to the previous year. Our results reveal that, while a reversal took place in the 2008 election with Blacks having a more favorable assessment of the economy than Whites, a stronger difference occurred between White Republicans and White Democrats. First, our analysis demonstrates that partisanship is the most salient variable impacting the economic assessments of persons across the political, social, and economic spectrums despite the actual fiscal environment within the country. Second, our research confirms an Obama effect further validating Michael Dawson's utility heuristic that Blacks prioritize perceived group interest over individual interest. Lastly, we found that this Obama effect extends to low-income Whites, suggesting that class is also an important determinant of citizen perceptions of the economy.

### **Bully Partisan or Partisan Bully?: Partisanship, Elite Polarization, and U.S. Presidential Communication**

Brian Harrison

*Social Science Quarterly*, forthcoming

**Objective:** The objective of the study was to investigate the impact of perceptions of elite polarization on presidential communication. Polarization among political elites has been a well-studied aspect of political science scholarship. Party competition is seen as healthy for democracy; however, polarization often leads to gridlock and legislative inaction. There is ongoing debate about how elite polarization affects individual attitude formation, particularly in relation to important political institutions like the American presidency.

**Methods:** I conducted randomized laboratory experiments in which respondents read information about the state of partisanship in American politics, viewed videos of President Obama, and then answered questions about issues and presidential approval.

**Results:** The results show that when participants were primed to think about elite polarization as high, presidential communication yields job-approval ratings, issue-importance ratings, and issue stances closer to the party line, compared to participants primed to think elite polarization is low or when there was no prime at all.

**Conclusion:** The findings suggest that when primed to think about strong partisan disagreements, partisan identity overwhelms respondents, and makes them focus most on their partisan identity, regardless of content; without such a prime, respondents are more likely to consider the content of presidential communication. Perceptions of partisan acrimony can affect how partisans perceive important institutions like the presidency in terms of job approval and issue stance.

### **You Cannot be Serious: The Impact of Accuracy Incentives on Partisan Bias in Reports of Economic Perceptions**

Markus Prior, Gaurav Sood & Kabir Khanna

*Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, Fall 2015, Pages 489-518

**Abstract:**

When surveyed about economic conditions, supporters of the president's party often report more positive conditions than its opponents. Scholars have interpreted this finding to mean that partisans cannot even agree on matters of fact. We test an alternative interpretation: Partisans give partisan congenial answers even when they have, or could have inferred, information less flattering to the party they identify with. To test this hypothesis, we administered two surveys to nationally representative samples, experimentally manipulating respondents' motivation to be accurate via monetary incentives and on-screen appeals. Both treatments reduced partisan differences in reports of economic conditions significantly. Many partisans interpret factual questions about economic conditions as opinion questions, unless motivated to see them otherwise. Typical survey conditions thus reveal a mix of what partisans know about the economy, and what they would like to be true.

### **Unfair Partisan Gerrymanders in Politics and Law: A Diagnostic Applied to Six Cases**

Michael McDonald & Robin Best

*Election Law Journal*, December 2015, Pages 312-330

**Abstract:**

We propose standards for detecting partisan gerrymandering as a finding of fact and for determining whether the factual finding is legally significant. The standard is grounded in the U.S. constitutional principle of equal voting rights and is easily manageable inasmuch as its prime analytical feature requires comparing a party's district median vote percentage to its district mean vote percentage. Equally important, the median-mean comparison serves as an effective indicator of whether gerrymandering is the cause of the inequitable treatment. We apply the standard to six alleged cases of gerrymandering of congressional districts and find three cases are not gerrymanders, three are gerrymanders, and one of the three gerrymanders crosses the threshold to legal significance.

### **Does US partisan conflict matter for the Euro area?**

Chak Hung Jack Cheng, William Hankins & Ching-Wai (Jeremy) Chiu

*Economics Letters*, January 2016, Pages 64–67

**Abstract:**

This paper highlights the international transmission of political uncertainty originated from a US partisan conflict shock, a newly identified shock that transmits a type of uncertainty beyond the economic policy uncertainty spillovers identified by Colombo (2013). Using the recently developed US Partisan Conflict Index (USPC) developed by Azzimonti (2014), we find that a one standard deviation USPC shock leads to a 0.2 percent decline in European industrial production. We also show that, compared with US policy uncertainty shocks, a shock to US partisan conflict creates deeper and more persistent spill-

over effects to the Euro area.

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### Cognitive Dissonance or Credibility? A Comparison of Two Theoretical Explanations for Selective Exposure to Partisan News

Miriam Metzger, Ethan Hartzell & Andrew Flanagin  
*Communication Research*, forthcoming

#### Abstract:

Selective exposure research indicates that news consumers tend to seek out attitude-consistent information and avoid attitude-challenging information. This study examines online news credibility and cognitive dissonance as theoretical explanations for partisan selective exposure behavior. After viewing an attitudinally consistent, challenging, or politically balanced online news source, cognitive dissonance, credibility perceptions, and likelihood of selective exposure were measured. Results showed that people judge attitude-consistent and neutral news sources as more credible than attitude-challenging news sources, and although people experience slightly more cognitive dissonance when exposed to attitude-challenging news sources, overall dissonance levels were quite low. These results refute the cognitive dissonance explanation for selective exposure and suggest a new explanation that is based on credibility perceptions rather than psychological discomfort with attitude-challenging information.

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### Can intelligence explain the overrepresentation of liberals and leftists in American academia?

Noah Carl  
*Intelligence*, November–December 2015, Pages 181–193

#### Abstract:

It is well known that individuals with so-called liberal or leftist views are overrepresented in American academia. By bringing together data on American academics, the general population and a high-IQ population, the present study investigates how much of this overrepresentation can be explained by intelligence. It finds that intelligence can account for most of the disparity between academics and the general population on the issues of abortion, homosexuality and traditional gender roles. By contrast, it finds that intelligence cannot account for any of the disparity between academics and the general population on the issue of income inequality. But for methodological reasons, this finding is tentative. Furthermore, the paper finds that intelligence may account for less than half of the disparity on liberal versus conservative ideology, and much less than half the disparity on Democrat versus Republican identity. Following the analysis, eight alternative explanations for liberal and leftist overrepresentation are reviewed.

By KEVIN LEWIS | 09:00:00 AM

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