

# The Role of Personal Agency and Dissatisfaction in Predicting Support for Donald Trump

by

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## Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

In his bid for the Presidency, Donald Trump marketed himself as the true voice of the people and as the sole leader who could restore America's greatness. This approach is reminiscent of reactionary populist movements, which have been shown historically to attract "authoritarians", that is, the dissatisfied and personally insecure who look to a powerful leader to vicariously fulfill their desires. More recent psychological research suggests, however, that another group of supporters may also be drawn to such movements. This "dominance-seeking" group is instead characterized by strong desires to attain status and power for themselves and their ingroups. In two studies conducted in the lead up to 2016 Presidential election, I measured White male, American participants' levels of personal agency and satisfaction with social issues as predictors of support for Donald Trump's campaign. My findings show that high agency and low satisfaction predicted the strongest support for Trump, suggesting that his most ardent supporters fit the profile of the dominance-seeking group as opposed to the more historically identified authoritarian group. These findings highlight the importance of considering multiple perspectives when it comes to characterizing political movements and their motivations.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A US Presidential election is always a monumental event. By some measures, the most recent 2016 election ran for 597 days (Friedman, 2016). For reference, you could potentially fit 4 Mexican, 7 Canadian, 14 British and Australian, or 41 French elections within this time frame (Roller, 2016). Looking at some other metrics, fundraising and spending tallies by candidates were well into the billions of dollars (Narayanswamy, Cameron, & Gold, 2017) and the two final candidates traveled more than four hundred thousand miles between them (Rocheleau, 2016). While this may seem excessive, it is perhaps for good reason. For all the time logged, money spent, and distance traveled, by the end of it all, the winning candidate will hold arguably the most powerful position in the world.

With all that being said, something about this most recent election in particular seemed remarkable. This feeling was probably due in no small part to the fact that there was a very non-traditional candidate who ran for Office. In fact, not only did he run for Office, but he also became a serious contender for it, and eventually went on to win it all. This candidate was of course Donald Trump.

President Trump's election win was perhaps surprising because of the way the candidate positioned himself. The billionaire, real estate mogul, and reality TV star seemed to have sold himself as the leader of a reactionary populist movement, one that looked to challenge both the mainstream and conventional political establishment. Like leaders of most populist movements, Trump marketed himself as the true voice of the people in opposition to the phony and corrupt elites. At the same time, Trump's candidacy can be described as a reactionary movement as, like other reactionary movements, his assessment of social problems and prescribed solutions were for the most part backward-looking. Trump often harkened back to a better time and emphasized

the need to “Make America Great Again” by addressing problems that he felt came from foreign adversaries and internal scapegoats.

Examining the motivations that fuel reactionary populist movements has been a long-standing interest of social psychology. One of the early catalysts for this interest occurred in the midst of World War II, as psychologists tried to explain how fascist parties found so much success (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Fromm, 1941). Psychological accounts of these reactionary populist movements prototypically characterize supporters as “authoritarians,” people who are seeking out strong, external authority figures who can offer vicarious strength to compensate for their own personal underlying psychological insecurities. These insecurities are characterized in varying ways according to different models. Early models argued insecurity stemmed from the repressed desires of the masses (Adorno et al., 1950), while more recent models emphasize things like a need for social order and structure (Jost & Banaji, 1994) or a lack of personal control (Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin, 2008). What all these accounts have in common, however, is the tendency to portray authoritarian followers as possessing diminished personal agency and, as such, requiring a strong external control to compensate and make up for personal shortcomings (Kay & Eibach, 2013). A recent integrative model further suggests that the underlying worldview of authoritarians is one that sees the world as a dangerous place that can devolve into chaos and disorder (Altemeyer, 1988; Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). This constant threat leads authoritarians to feel a sense of low personal control over their lives, motivating them to lend their support to powerful external structures that have the power to contain threats.

Looking to Donald Trump’s campaign, it is clear to see how he may have appealed to authoritarians. One of the primary themes of Trump’s messages was that America was at risk

because of the decisions of past regimes and that the people were scared of and angry at this. He described how soft immigration policies were responsible for things like crime, terrorism, and drugs in America (Beckwith, 2016; The Washington Post, 2015). He also talked about how weak negotiation skills and incompetence on the part of the incumbent Democrats had left places like the Middle East a powder keg for war (Gambino, 2016). While identifying these threats, however, Trump also posed himself as the solution to these problems. Concerning things like the visa system and the military, he claimed that nobody knew more about those things than he did (Blake, 2016). He campaigned on very tough policies that would control threats such as the Mexican border wall to prevent illegal immigration and trafficking (Fox News, 2016), “extreme vetting” (Preston, 2016; Vitatli, 2016) and “enhanced interrogation techniques” (Diamond, 2016) to weed out and get information on terrorists, and even the potential use of nuclear weapons to deal with persistent threats (Legum, 2016). In this way, Trump acknowledged feelings that authoritarians might have concerning their fear of the world devolving into chaos. At the same time though, he also characterized himself as the strong leader who would protect them from danger. In his speech accepting the Republican Party’s nomination, after Trump explained how America was facing existential threats that he characterized starkly as “death, destruction, terrorism, and weakness,” he subsequently claimed, “I alone can fix it (Collinson & CNN, 2016).” Given the prominent role that these classic authoritarian themes played in Trump’s campaign there is good reason to expect that the standard account of authoritarians, along with their worldview and motivations, might provide a good description of Trump supporters.

A more recent model of political ideology, however, suggests that the standard account of authoritarians may not always apply when explaining support for reactionary populist movements and, instead, a different motivational foundation may be present (Duckitt, 2001;

Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). While this model recognizes that authoritarian motivations rooted in low personal agency and a “world is a dangerous place” mindset may explain support for reactionary populist movements, it proposes a second profile as well. This second profile of supporter is motivated by a desire to obtain personal and group dominance (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and carries the worldview that we live in a “competitive jungle” (Duckitt, 2001). Unlike authoritarians, who may be characterized as having low personal agency, these social dominance seeking reactionaries are instead characterized as having high agency and a high drive for personal and group empowerment.

Again, a look at Trump’s campaign illustrates that he emphasized themes that may have strongly engaged these dominance-seekers. Trump often brought up how the world was a competitive place with “winners” and “losers”, but that America’s leaders seemed to have forgotten this and now the people were fed up. Trump also framed international relations in ways that suggested a competitive, zero-sum view. For example, when he referred to deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (Abadi, 2016), NAFTA (Gillespie, 2016), and trade deals with China (The Economist, 2016) he lamented how Americans were losing on these deals. He also talked a lot about domestic issues such as unemployment and the loss of jobs to immigrants that had left true Americans struggling to find work (Preston, 2016). He did not just stop in identifying these issues, however, but also posed solutions that only he himself could carry out because of his business acumen and singular knowledge (Blake, 2016). “America First” policies, for example, that would entail things like the renegotiation or outright scrapping of unfavourable deals (The White House, 2017a) or the relaxation of corporate taxes to encourage businesses to stay in America and hire Americans (The White House, 2017b). These things, he argued, would put America back on the path to its rightful place on top. In his speech accepting the Republican

Party's nomination Trump articulated these dominance concerns quite clearly at one point claiming "I will win for you" if the American people chose him to be their leader (Schoeder, 2016). For these reasons dominance-seeking concerns might provide an alternate explanation for the motivations that may have been fueling Trump supporters.

In sum, Trump's campaign seems to resemble a reactionary populist movement. While the standard profile of supporters of such movements is that of an authoritarian, a person with low personal agency who sees the world as a threatening place and thus needs a powerful leader to enforce control for them, a plausible second profile of likely supporters also emerges. This dominance-seeking group is instead characterized by high agency and a desire to obtain means to exercise that agency to propel their own personal and group status. Looking at some of Trump's stances on social issues, it is very clear that he could have appealed to either of these groups. Not only did Trump acknowledge both of these groups' concerns, but he also posed very direct solutions to them. This strategy may have gone a long way in getting Trump the support and voters he needed to become successful in his bid for the Presidency.

### **This Research**

The purpose of this research is to examine Donald Trump's supporters and determine which of the two supporter profiles, that is, low agency authoritarians or high agency dominance-seekers, he may have appealed to more. The model of populist movement support that I am testing is a reactive approach motivation model (Jonas et al., 2014; McGregor, Prentice, & Nash, 2009; McGregor, Nash, & Prentice, 2010). Reactive approach motivation models entail two key ingredients: a motivational predisposition and a threat that activates that motivation. The particular model that I am testing suggests that the motivational predisposition for supporting a reactionary populist movement may have entailed either a low-agency, authoritarian motivation

or a high-agency, dominance-seeking motivation. The relevant threats for activating these motivations would be perceptions of danger and perceptions of competitive threats respectively. Therefore, to operationalize the two profiles of potential supporters of Trump's populist campaign, I used two predictor variables. The first is a measure of trait personal agency to capture which type of predisposing motive was associated with support for this populist movement and the second is a measure of social issues satisfaction to capture perceived threats that may activate these motivations.

### **Personal Agency**

If Trump's campaign appealed more to the authoritarian group, then participants who are low in personal agency should show higher levels of support for Trump when they are threatened compared to threatened high-agency individuals and unthreatened individuals. This low-agency group would likely carry personal insecurities that should be activated when they see the world becoming an unstructured or dangerous place. As a result, they may see Trump as a powerful source of external control who can address their needs and protect them from looming dangers and threats.

Alternatively, if Trump's appeal was mainly concentrated in dominance-seeking individuals, I would expect to see that participants who are high in personal agency should be predisposed to support Trump when threatened compared to low-agency individuals or unthreatened individuals. This high-agency group would likely be looking for opportunities to increase their standing in the competitive jungle that they perceive the world to be. This group may see Trump as the person to address their concerns about America's declining competitiveness or perceived unearned status gains by outgroups within their own system.

I chose to operationalize the distinct motivational profiles with a general agency measure rather than the usual right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981) and social dominance scales (Pratto et al., 1994) because I sought to measure the underlying motivations in a way that did not contain explicit political content. The standard measures of authoritarianism and social dominance orientation contain items that directly reference political values and attitudes. If both the predictor variables and the outcome measures in my study contained explicit political content then there would be a potential that any associations may be due to shared method variance rather than due to the hypothesized motivational processes. Therefore, instead of using the standard authoritarianism and social dominance scales I used a measure that I thought would capture the underlying differences in personal agency that I hypothesized underlie these distinct motivations.

### **Social Issues Satisfaction**

I measured participants' satisfaction with a variety of relevant social issues as a measure of threat that may have catalyzed support for Trump's campaign. Populist movements arise because of growing dissatisfaction with the status quo. Philosophers Kierkegaard and Nietzsche called this dissatisfaction *ressentiment*, or resentment. They argued that when the masses could no longer stand the oppression heaped on them by the elite and privileged this caused a boiling over of resentments that led to populist revolts (Kierkegaard & Dru, 1962; Nietzsche, 1887). For authoritarians, this dissatisfaction would be motivated by fear of danger and disorder. For example, they may be dissatisfied with the social issue of illegal immigration because they think immigrants will bring crime or possibly dilute the culture of the country if they refuse to assimilate (Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008). For dominance-seekers, dissatisfaction would be motivated by threats of competition. Taking the example of illegal immigration again, they

may oppose it because they are concerned that immigrants will outcompete them for jobs or resources (Thomsen et al., 2008).

To allow evidence for either type of reactionary profile to emerge I sought to measure dissatisfaction with social issues in way that would be neutral to whether these dissatisfactions were rooted in authoritarian concerns or dominance-related concerns. My intention was to capture general feelings of dissatisfaction rather than ask for the specific reasons for these feelings. One reason I did this was the general evidence suggesting that people can usually report their levels of satisfaction-dissatisfaction with more validity than they can identify the specific reasons for that satisfaction-dissatisfaction (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Thus, rather than building authoritarian and dominance motives into the reactive concerns measure, I attempted to measure the contribution of these motives solely through the measure of personal agency and used the measure of social issues satisfaction to capture threats that might be relevant to either of these motives.

The main goal of my research is to test which of these two groups of potential supporters was most motivated to support Trump's populist movement: low-agency, low-satisfaction authoritarian followers or high-agency, low-satisfaction dominance-seekers. As mentioned previously, there are reasons to believe aspects of Trump's messages contained themes that might resonate with authoritarians as well as themes that might resonate with dominance-seekers.

## **Predictions**

1. There will be a main effect of social issues satisfaction such that those who are relatively less satisfied are more likely to support Trump.



2. There will be an interaction between social issues satisfaction and personal agency. However, the pattern of this interaction may fit either an authoritarian profile or a dominance-seeking profile:
  - a. If the pattern fits the authoritarian profile, then those with low agency and low satisfaction will support Trump more strongly relative to those who are high-agency and low-satisfaction and those who are high-satisfaction, regardless of agency.
  - b. If the pattern fits the dominance-seeking profile, then those with high agency and low satisfaction will support Trump more strongly relative to those who are low-agency and low-satisfaction and those who are high-satisfaction, regardless of agency.

## CHAPTER 2: PILOT STUDY

I conducted an initial pilot study on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The primary goal of the pilot study was validating my measures to make sure participants understood them, with a secondary goal of testing my predictions. Participants answered questions about their satisfaction with various social issues and filled out a self-report measure of personal agency. Participants also indicated whom they intended to vote for during the election and answered a hypothetical question about the lengths they would go to support Donald Trump. A few other exploratory measures (e.g., items measuring perceptions of the candidates' characteristics) were included but are not directly relevant to the focus of this paper.

I predicted I would see a main effect of social issues satisfaction such that lower satisfaction predicts support for Trump. Also following my prediction, I expect to see an interaction between social issues satisfaction and personal agency, that is, low satisfaction predicting differing levels of support for Trump at different levels of personal agency. If the interaction with low agency predicts stronger support for Trump, this would suggest that Trump may have appealed more to the authoritarian group. If high agency predicts stronger support, this would suggest that Trump may have appealed more to the dominance-seeking group.

### **Method**

**Participants.** Data was collected the period of June 10-16, 2016. In total, 101 White male, American citizens completed my pilot study. I specifically chose this demographic because this was the group that was projected most likely to support Trump (Cohn, 2016; Wasserman, 2016) and I wanted to maximize the chances of detecting an effect. This sample size was chosen because I wanted a quick test of my measures before committing to a larger sample that would require greater resources.

**Procedure and Materials.** First, participants answered demographics and screening questions. Those who fit my screening criteria were then randomly split by our survey platform, Qualtrics, into two equal groups. One group answered the items about social issues satisfaction and personal agency (the predictor variables) first, followed by whom they intended to vote for and their levels of support for Trump (the dependent measures). The other group saw the items in the reverse order, that is, dependent measures first followed by the predictor variables. This counterbalancing was an exploratory choice on my part. Following research on threats and defensive reactions, I thought if participants were cued with answering about their (dis)satisfaction with social issues first, that this might lead them to more extreme answers when indicating their support for candidates (Jonas et al., 2014; McGregor et al., 2009). After these measures, participants filled out some feedback questions asking if they had any problems with the study. No participants expressed any difficulty responding to my measures of interest.<sup>1</sup>

## **Results**

To analyze the results of my pilot study, I ran a Question Order x Social Issues Satisfaction x Personal Agency regression model. Predictor variables were centred using standardized z-scores. For both voting intentions and the Trump defense measures there were trending results for the 3-way interaction,  $\beta = .07$ ,  $t(100) = 1.46$ ,  $p = .149$  and  $\beta = .29$ ,  $t(100) = -1.98$ ,  $p = .051$  respectively<sup>2</sup>.

The pattern of these results appears to support the prediction that authoritarians are Trump's strongest supporters (see Appendix A for a graphical representation). Of those who answered the predictor items first, those who were both low in satisfaction and low in agency

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<sup>1</sup> For more in-depth details about the procedure and measures, see Study 1 which largely uses the same paradigm

<sup>2</sup> Detailed results available upon request

were more likely to support Trump. There also appears to be a main effect of social issues satisfaction on the voting intentions measure, such that lower satisfaction predicts intentions to vote for Trump, and a main effect of personal agency for both dependent measures such that lower agency predicts more support for Trump. Given the small sample size ( $N = 101$ ), however, these results should be interpreted with caution. Therefore, in Study 1 I sought to further test my hypotheses in a full-scale study with a much larger sample.

## CHAPTER 3: STUDY 1

Study 1 was meant to provide a stronger test of my predictions. This study measured participants' satisfaction with the way their country was handling various social issues and their self-reported personal agency. Participants again answered items about which candidate they intended to vote for and the lengths they would go to support Trump in a hypothetical scenario. Novel items also additionally measured participants' dedication towards supporting their candidate.

### **Pre-registration**

Based on the trending pattern observed in the pilot study, I pre-registered predicted results for Study 1 on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/>). Specifically, I pre-registered the predicted Question Order x Social Issues Satisfaction x Personal Agency interaction, hypothesizing that those who see my predictor measures first, are low-satisfaction, and are low-agency would report the highest levels of support for Trump. This prediction would be in line with the hypothesis that the authoritarians rather than the dominance-seekers are Trump's strongest supporters.

### **Method**

**Participants.** Data was collected July 12-19, 2016. Of note, this time period led up to and included the first two days of the 2016 Republican National Convention. I recruited 600 White male, American citizens on MTurk. Participants were compensated \$0.50 USD for completing my study. Again, I specifically screened for White male, American citizens as this group was projected to be most likely to support Trump. The sample size was chosen because I wanted to a much larger sample (relative to the pilot study which had trending patterns) to allow for more confidence in the results. Analyses excluded 19 participants who did not complete at

least half of the survey items in their entirety, indicated that they did not want their data used in the final analyses, or expressed anger over the survey items on a feedback question. My final sample consisted of 581 participants ( $M_{age} = 36.6$ ,  $SD_{age} = 11.9$ ;  $M_{Income\ Bracket} = \$35,001$  to  $\$50,000$ ; 64% had at least a college degree, see Table 1 for complete demographics).

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants (%) by Study*

Variable	Study 1	Study 2
<b>Age</b>		
- 20 or below	2.1	2.5
- 21 to 30	33.6	28.6
- 31 to 40	34.8	28.2
- 41 to 50	15.3	23.9
- 51 to 60	8.3	10.9
- 61 or above	5.7	5.5
- missing or N/A	0.2	0.4
<b>Education</b>		
- Below College Degree	36.0	39.5
- College Degree	43.2	42.4
- Above College Degree	20.8	18.1
<b>Household Income</b>		
- \$35,000 or below	34.3	24.4
- \$35,001 to \$75,000	36.5	40.3
- \$75,001 or above	29.3	35.3
<b>Political Leaning</b>		
- Liberal <sup>A</sup>	48.1	11.3
- Moderate	19.6	18.5
- Conservative <sup>A</sup>	30.8	70.2
- None <sup>B</sup>	1.4	--
<b>Party Affiliation</b>		
- Democrat	35.3	7.1
- Republican	24.6	66.0
- Independent	32.7	24.8
- Other parties	4.0	1.3
- No preference	3.3	0.8

<sup>A</sup> Indicated at least “Slightly liberal” or “Slightly conservative”

<sup>B</sup> Indicated “I haven’t thought about it much”

**Procedure and Materials.** Participants were invited to my study on MTurk. The survey was titled *Assessing Support for Political Candidates* and was described as a study that would

examine a participant's feelings towards certain political candidates via questions about their attitudes towards candidates and questions about themselves. The study was also described as having eligibility requirements that would be assessed at the beginning of the task.

Upon starting the survey, participants filled out demographics and screening questions. Prospective participants were asked their race, gender, and citizenship status along with age, household income, education level, political orientation and party affiliation. Individuals who were White male, American citizens were allowed to continue with the rest of the survey. Ineligible individuals were told they did not qualify and were dismissed from the rest of the survey. Participants then read an information letter and formally consented to have their data collected. They then read and filled out an Instructional Manipulation Check that explained the importance of accurate responses and attentive participation. They had to pass this check before proceeding with the rest of the survey.

Like the pilot study, half of the participants answered the predictor variables first, followed by the dependent measures. The other half of the participants got the items in the reverse order. A few additional exploratory measures<sup>3</sup> included in this study were not analyzed for the purpose of this paper.

***Predictor Variables.*** To assess levels of social issues satisfaction I used the same measure as in the pilot study. Participants were asked “How satisfied are you with the way our political system seems to currently be handling these issues?” followed by a list of 17 social issues (e.g., Health Care, Education, Unemployment and Low Wages, Illegal Immigration). Participants answered these items on a 1 (*Extremely dissatisfied*) to 7 (*Extremely satisfied*) scale.

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<sup>3</sup> These included measures of participants' general, financial, and relationship satisfaction; their trait anxiety; perceived personal ability to influence government; questions comparing the qualities of Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton; and questions about how they felt at the end of the study.

To compute an overall measure of social issues satisfaction, I averaged the 17 items together ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ,  $\alpha = .91$ ).

To assess a participant's personal agency, I also used the same measure as I did in the pilot study. The measure was created by Mike Prentice who factor analyzed items from a variety of scales used in the threat, defense, and motivation literatures (Prentice, in prep.). The analysis showed that 15 items loaded together well and it is argued that someone who scores highly on these items can be described as “reflecting a general agentic and engaged personality style characterized by wanting to move toward incentives, having confidence in navigating pursuits, integrating pursuits with ideals, and feeling rewarded when goals are attained” (Prentice, in prep.). Sample items include: “In general, I am focused on achieving positive outcomes in my life” (Rosenberg, 1965); “Overall, I am more oriented toward achieving success than preventing failure” (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002); “If I see a chance to get something I want, I move on it right away” (Carver & White, 1994); and “I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me” (Snyder et al., 1991). Participants answered these items on a 1 (*Very false for me*) to 4 (*Very true for me*) scale. To compute an overall measure of personal agency, I averaged the 15 items together ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ,  $\alpha = .93$ ).

***Dependent Measures.*** Participants indicated which candidate they intended to vote for in the upcoming election. Participants saw the following options: Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, other (please specify), and “I would not vote for any of the current candidates”. In total, 33.2% of participants indicated intentions to vote for Donald Trump, 34.3% for Clinton, 18.4% for other candidates (mostly Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party, Hillary Clinton’s rival for the Democratic Party nomination Bernie Sanders, and Jill Stein of the Green Party), and 14.1% said they would not vote for any of the current candidates.



New for Study 1 were three measures designed to further capture the strength of support a participant had for their candidate. Participants only filled these measures out if they indicated they actually intended to vote for a candidate. The first new measure asked questions regarding participants' dedication to voting on the day of the election. Participants were asked three questions: "For the general election this November, how likely are you to vote [if you had to take time off work/ if you were sick or not feeling well / if there was a severe storm or bad weather]?" Participants responded on a 1 (*Extremely Unlikely*) to 5 (*Extremely Likely*) scale. In the final analysis, these three items were averaged together ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ,  $\alpha = .94$ ).

The second new measure asked about the amount of time the participant was willing to stay in line to vote for their candidate. For this voting time measure, participants chose an answer from a scale with options in 15-minute increments, starting from less than 15 minutes all the way up to 4 hours or longer ( $M = 96$  min,  $SD = 69$  min).

The last new measure asked questions about the level of campaign support a participant was willing to undertake. Participants indicated how much they would want to take a picture with their candidate, how important it would be to follow their preferred candidate in the media, how much they would like to wear their candidate's logo, and how important it would be for them to defend their candidate on Internet comment boards and forums. They answered these questions on a 1 (*Not very much*) to 10 (*Very much so*) scale. I took the average score on these four items for my analyses ( $M = 5.28$ ,  $SD = 2.47$ ,  $\alpha = .84$ ).

Lastly, participants read about the same hypothetical scenario involving Donald Trump as used in the pilot study. The scenario was based on actual events occurring at the time where there was speculation about Donald Trump not getting the official nomination as the Republican

Presidential candidate despite him attaining the most support in the Republican Primaries (Jaffe, 2016). The scenario read:

The Republic National Convention this July will officially nominate a candidate to represent them for the presidential election in November. While Donald Trump has the majority of delegates needed to automatically secure the nomination, it may not be that simple. Because of several controversial comments he has made, there have been rumors of delegates changing their minds and pulling their support from him in favor of other candidates. It is therefore possible that Donald Trump may not become the Republican nominee.

Suppose this very situation happens and the Republican Party decides not to nominate Donald Trump as their presidential candidate. Trump, outraged at this, publicly calls the system “rigged and crooked” exclaiming “the people have had their vote taken away from them by phony politicians!” He further tells his supporters to voice their disapproval and urges them to combine their efforts in demonstrating their displeasure.

Participants answered eight items adapted from Altemeyer’s “Posse” scale (Altemeyer, 2006).

This defense of Trump measure asks whether participants would endorse various protest actions in light of the scenario they just read with each action increasing in extremity over the previous one. The list starts with relatively mundane protest actions such as telling family and friends how bad the decision was and signing petitions. It gets more serious with the middle items such as blocking access to government buildings. Finally, it ends with very extreme actions such as sabotaging and actively hindering the rest of the election process and supporting violent riots. Participants were asked how likely they would be to do these actions on a 1 (*Extremely unlikely*

to do this) to 7 (*Extremely likely to do this*) scale. Their responses on the eight items were averaged together to get a final score. For this measure, I decided to only analyze those who identified as Republicans ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ,  $\alpha = .84$ ). I did this because non-Republicans were not endorsing these items highly ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ,  $\alpha = .91$ ). As a very last step, participants were asked if there was any reason they felt their data should not be used and read a feedback letter explaining the purpose of the study. For descriptives and correlations on all the described variables, see tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

*Mean (SD), Skewness, Kurtosis, and Reliability of Measures by Study*

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Study 1</b>				
Social Issues Satisfaction	3.11 (1.05)	0.00	-0.43	0.91
Personal Agency	3.28 (0.50)	-0.86	1.03	0.93
Voting Dedication	3.79 (1.37)	-0.84	-0.65	0.94
Voting Time	7.43 (5.62)	0.73	-0.93	--
Campaign Support	5.28 (2.47)	-0.04	-0.85	0.84
Defense of Trump	2.98 (1.26)	0.41	-0.08	0.84
<b>Study 2</b>				
Social Issues Satisfaction	2.93 (1.05)	0.47	0.09	0.88
Personal Agency	3.26 (0.52)	-0.27	-0.86	0.93
CID towards Whites	4.78 (3.30)	-0.43	-0.75	--
CID towards Blacks	-4.47 (3.12)	0.56	-0.44	--
Defense of Trump	3.47 (1.52)	0.22	-0.61	0.91

*Note:* CID = Changes in Discrimination, Study 1's Defense of Trump analyzed only for Republicans ( $n = 143$ )

Table 3

*Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables (Study 1)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social Issues Satisfaction	--				
2. Personal Agency	-.05	--			
3. Voting Dedication	-.05	.15**	--		
4. Voting Time	-.15**	.10*	.57**	--	
5. Campaign Support	.01	.15**	.29**	.28**	--
6. Defense of Trump	<.01	.05	.10*	.06	.38**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

## Results

Preliminary analysis of Study 1's data revealed no significant effects of Questions Order on my predictor variables or dependent measures. As such, all subsequent analyses collapse across order.

**Voting Intentions.** I first analyzed the voting intentions variable using a logistic regression. Predictor variables were social issues satisfaction, personal agency, and their interaction (see Figure 1 and Table 4). These predictors were centred by generating standardized z-scores. The full model was significant over a constant only model,  $\chi^2 (df = 3) = 30.87, p < .001$ . Consistent with my predictions, social issues satisfaction made a significant contribution to prediction,  $b = -.38, SE = .09, p < .001$ . Personal agency did as well,  $b = .22, SE = .10, p = .026$ . The results also indicated a significant interaction,  $b = -.23, SE = .10, p = .023$ . To probe this interaction, I first looked at participants who were at  $-1 SD$  in social issues satisfaction and found that higher levels of personal agency predicted greater odds of voting for Trump,  $b = .45, SE = .14, OR = 1.564, p = .001$ . Similarly, at  $+1 SD$  personal agency, low social issues satisfaction predicted higher odds of voting for Trump,  $b = -.61, SE = .14, OR = .542, p < .001$ . Lastly, I looked at those  $+1 SD$  in social issues satisfaction and saw that, at this level, the predictive power of personal agency was non-significant,  $b = -.02, SE = .14, OR = .982, p = .903$ .

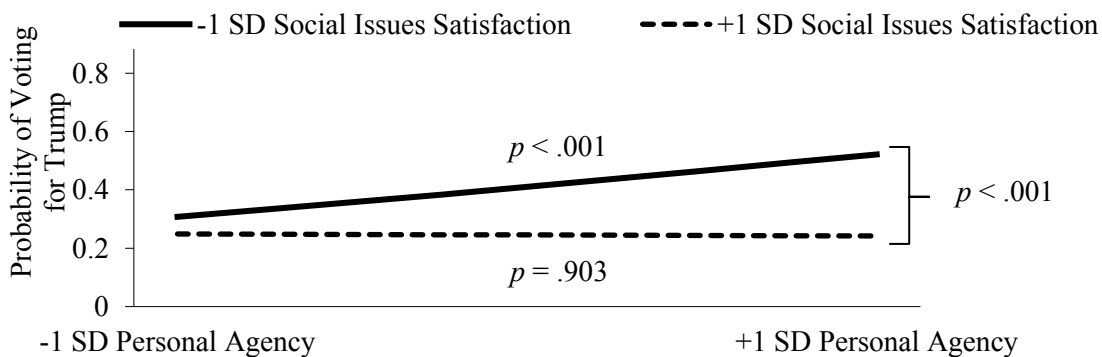


Figure 1. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting voting intentions (Study 1).

Table 4

*Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Trump Support from Social Issues Satisfaction and Personal Agency (Study 1)*

Variable	B(SE)	Wald	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B)	
				Lower	Upper
<b>Voting Intentions</b>					
Social Issues Satisfaction	-.38(.09)	16.29	.68***	.57	.82
Personal Agency	.22(.10)	4.98	1.24*	1.03	1.50
Interaction	-.23(.10)	5.13	.79*	.65	.97

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

For the remaining dependent measures, I ran a multiple regression model with personal agency, social issues satisfaction, and their interaction as predictors. These predictors were centred by generating standardized z-scores. For the voting dedication, voting time, and campaign support measures I weighted scores positively if the participant indicated they were voting for Trump and negatively if they said were voting for another candidate. This weighting was done by multiplying the participants' scores by +1 if they said they were voting for Trump on my voting intentions measure or -1 if they said they were voting for someone other than Trump. Thus, each measure captured the intensity of a participant's preference for Trump versus the rival candidates.

**Voting Dedication.** First, I looked at participant's dedication to voting (see Figure 2 and Table 5). Analyses excluded 82 participants who said they did not intend to vote for any of the current candidates, retaining 499 participants for analysis. The regression model predicted significant variance in voting dedication,  $F(3, 495) = 14.07, p < .001, adjusted R^2 = 0.07$ . Consistent with predictions, I saw a main effect of social issues satisfaction,  $\beta = -.24, t(495) = -5.44, p < .001$ , such that more dissatisfied participants tended to show stronger dedication to voting for Trump (over other candidates). There was also a main effect of personal agency,  $\beta = 0.095, t(495) = 2.202, p = .028$ . A significant interaction was also detected,  $\beta = -.11, t(495) = -$

2.54,  $p = .011$ . Simple effects tests showed that for those who were at -1 *SD* in social issues satisfaction, they expressed stronger dedication to voting for Trump (over other candidates) if they were also at +1 *SD* in personal agency,  $\beta = .21$ ,  $t(495) = -3.40$ ,  $p = .001$ , compared to those who were at -1 *SD* in personal agency. Likewise, for those who were +1 *SD* in personal agency, they expressed significantly stronger dedication to voting for Trump (over other candidates) if they were also -1 *SD* in social issues satisfaction,  $\beta = -0.35$ ,  $t(495) = -5.56$ ,  $p < .001$ , compared to those at +1 *SD* in social issues satisfaction. Also notable is that for participants at +1 *SD* in social issues satisfaction, there was no difference in dedication to voting across levels of personal agency,  $\beta = -.06$ ,  $t(495) = -0.25$ ,  $p = .801$ .

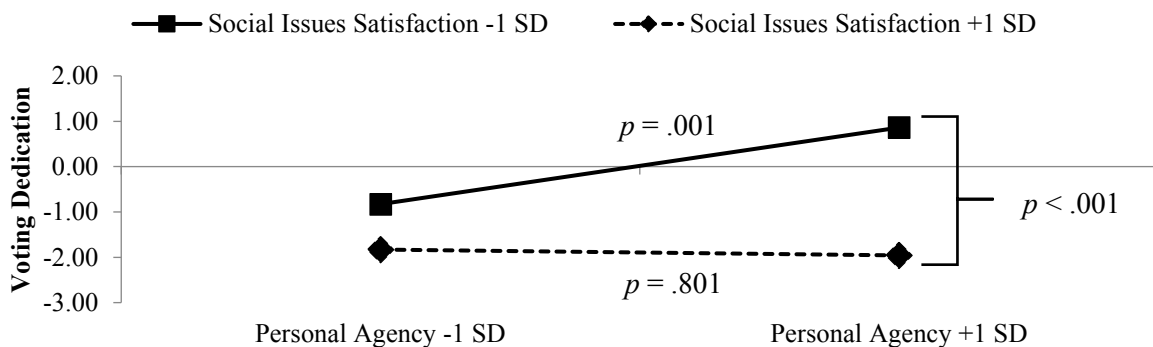


Figure 2. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting voting dedication (Study 1).

**Voting Time.** The same analysis was done for voting time (see Figure 3 and Table 5). The model predicted significant variance in voting time,  $F(3, 495) = 14.99$ ,  $p < .001$ , *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .08. I observed a main effect of social issues satisfaction,  $\beta = -.24$ ,  $t(495) = -5.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , but a non-significant main effect of personal agency,  $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $t(495) = 1.35$ ,  $p = .177$ . A significant interaction was found,  $\beta = -.14$ ,  $t(495) = -3.28$ ,  $p = .001$ . Simple effects tests showed that those who were at -1 *SD* in social issues satisfaction, were willing to wait in line longer to vote for Trump (over other candidates) if they were also +1 *SD* in personal agency,  $\beta = -.39$ ,  $t(495) = -$

6.22,  $p < .001$ , relative to those at -1 *SD* in personal agency. Similarly, those who were at +1 *SD* in personal agency were willing to wait in line longer to vote for Trump if they were also -1 *SD* in social issues satisfaction,  $\beta = .20$ ,  $t(495) = 3.33$ ,  $p = .001$ , compared to those who were more satisfied at +1 *SD*. Lastly, for those at +1 *SD* satisfaction with social issues, there was no difference across levels of personal agency,  $\beta = -.82$ ,  $t(495) = -1.36$ ,  $p = .174$ .

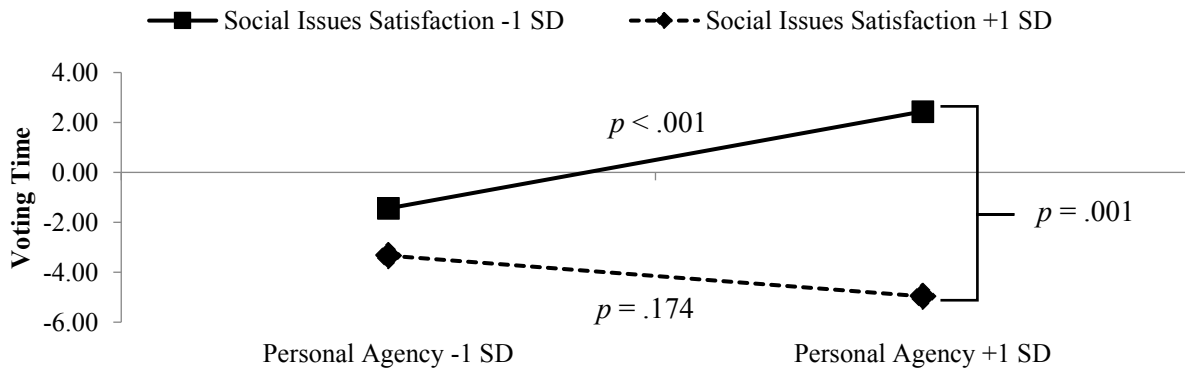


Figure 3. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting voting time (Study 1)

**Campaign Support.** For the measure of campaign support, the regression model predicted significant variance,  $F(3, 495) = 13.45$ ,  $p < .001$ , *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = 0.07 (see Figure 4 and Table 5). Consistent with predictions, I observed a main effect of social issues satisfaction,  $\beta = -.21$ ,  $t(495) = -4.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . A main effect of personal agency,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $t(495) = 2.71$ ,  $p = .007$ , was also detected. A significant interaction was also found,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $t(495) = -2.93$ ,  $p = .004$ . Simple effects tests showed that those who were -1 *SD* social issues satisfaction were more eager to support Trump’s campaign (over other candidates) if they were at +1 *SD* in personal agency,  $\beta = .25$ ,  $t(495) = 4.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , compared to those at -1 *SD* in personal agency. For those who were relatively high in personal agency at +1 *SD*, those who were also low in social issues satisfaction at -1 *SD* expressed a greater willingness to support Trump’s campaign (over other candidates),  $\beta = -.34$ ,  $t(495) = -5.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , compared to those as +1 *SD* in satisfaction. Lastly,

for those at +1 *SD* satisfaction with social issues, there was no difference in campaign support across levels of personal agency,  $\beta = -.06$ ,  $t(495) = -0.18$ ,  $p = .859$ .

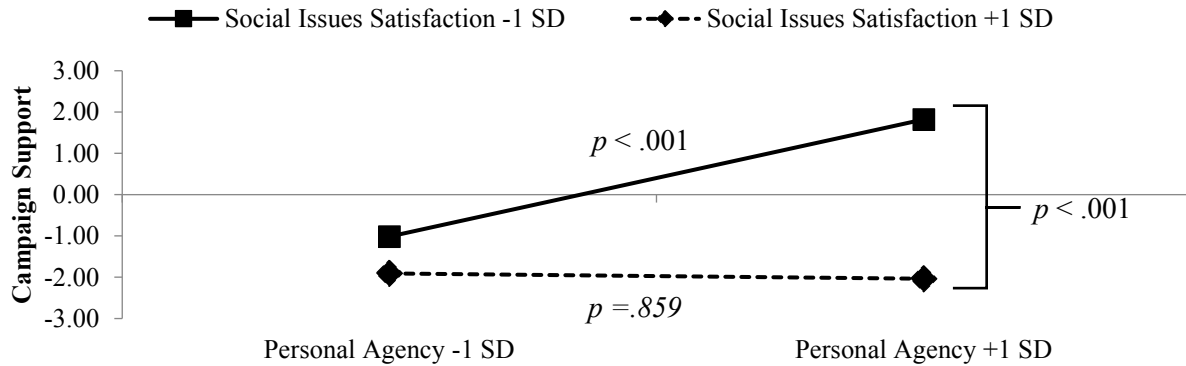


Figure 4. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting campaign support (Study 1).

**Defense of Trump.** For my last dependent measure, defense of Trump, I ran the same regression model (see Figure 5 and Table 5). As mentioned earlier, I restricted analysis to only those who identified as Republicans ( $n = 143$ ). The regression model predicted significant variance,  $F(3, 139) = 3.82$ ,  $p = .011$ ,  $adjusted R^2 = 0.07$ . Inconsistent with predictions, there was no main effect of social issues satisfaction,  $\beta = -.01$ ,  $t(139) = -0.11$ ,  $p = .915$ . There was also no main effect of personal agency,  $\beta = -.05$ ,  $t(139) = -0.45$ ,  $p = .653$ . However, there was a significant interaction,  $\beta = -0.28$ ,  $t(139) = -3.37$ ,  $p = .001$ . Simple effects tests showed that for those relatively dissatisfied with the country’s social issues at -1 *SD*, those who were also relatively higher in personal agency at +1 *SD* indicated greater likelihood of supporting Trump,  $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $t(139) = 2.24$ ,  $p = .026$ , compared to those low in personal agency at -1 *SD*. Those who rated relatively higher in personal agency at +1 *SD* indicated greater intentions to defend Trump in this hypothetical scenario if they were also relatively less satisfied with the country’s social issues at -1 *SD*,  $\beta = -0.32$ ,  $t(139) = -2.62$ ,  $p = .010$ , compared to those at +1 *SD*.



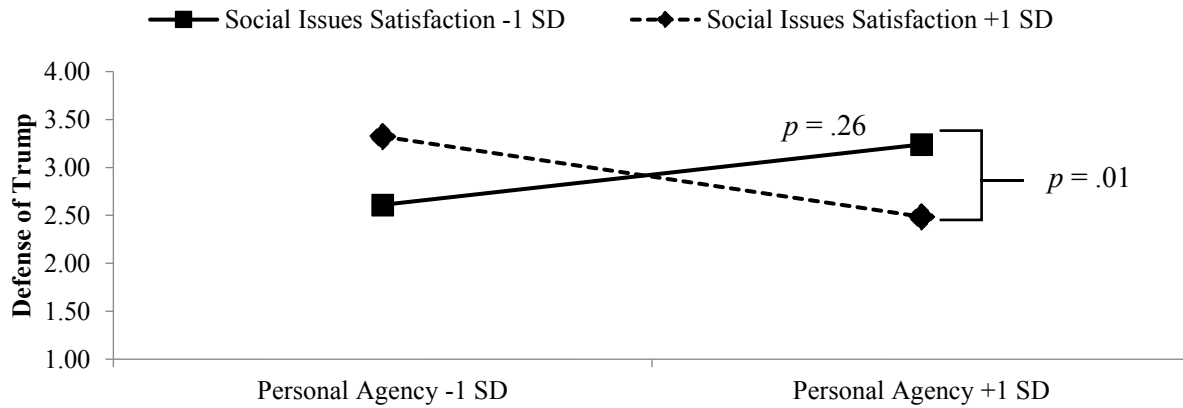


Figure 5. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting defense of Trump (Study 1).

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Trump Support from Social Issues Satisfaction and Personal Agency (Study 2)

Variable	B(SE)	t	95% Confidence Intervals	
			Lower	Upper
<b>Voting Dedication</b>				
Social Issues Satisfaction	-.96(.18)	-5.44***	-1.30	-.61
Personal Agency	.39(.18)	2.20*	.04	.74
Interaction	-.45(.18)	-2.54*	-.81	-.10
<b>Voting Time</b>				
Social Issues Satisfaction	-2.33(.41)	-5.64***	-3.14	-1.52
Personal Agency	.56(.41)	1.35	-.25	1.38
Interaction	-1.38(.41)	-3.28**	-2.20	-.55
<b>Campaign Support</b>				
Social Issues Satisfaction	-1.19(.25)	-4.78***	-1.68	-.70
Personal Agency	.68(.25)	2.71**	.19	1.17
Interaction	-.74(.25)	-2.93**	-1.24	-.24
<b>Defense of Trump<sup>A</sup></b>				
Social Issues Satisfaction	-.01(.10)	-.11	-.20	.18
Personal Agency	-.05(.11)	-.45	-.28	.17
Interaction	-.37(.11)	-3.37**	-.58	-.15

A: only Republicans

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

## Discussion

Across five different dependent measures, I saw a clear pattern of results. When I ran logistic and linear regressions on a model with social issues satisfaction, personal agency, and their interaction as predictors, I saw that this interaction significantly predicted participants' odds of voting for Trump, their dedication to voting for him on the day of the election, the amount of time they were willing to wait in line to vote for him, their support of his campaign, and the intention to jump to his defense should he hypothetically be replaced as the Republican candidate.

On four of these five measures, I saw a significant main effect of social issues satisfaction such that those who were relatively lower in satisfaction were showing greater support in the direction of Trump rather than in the direction of other candidates. This illustrates that Trump supporters were generally dissatisfied with the direction of the country, one of the needed elements for a reactionary populist movement.

Moreover, those who were low in social issues satisfaction and high in personal agency consistently expressed stronger enthusiasm for Trump. This finding is consistent with the idea that Trump's messages and campaign may have appealed most to those who fit the high agency dominance-seeking profile, rather than the low agency authoritarian profile.

One alternative explanation of the data is perhaps higher agency in itself predicts greater support for candidates. Indeed, for three of the dependent measures there was a main effect of personal agency. However, as illustrated in the results section, the simple slope at +1 *SD* social issues satisfaction is non-significant for four of the five dependent measures, such that differing levels of personal agency did not predict differing levels of Trump support among participants who are relatively satisfied with the current system. To say that another way, there was no evidence that high-agency, high-satisfaction participants were motivated to support Trump's

rivals as intensely as high-agency, low-satisfaction participants were motivated to support Trump. This divergence leads me to believe that something about Trump was able to motivate highly agentic voters in a way that other candidates did not.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I was expecting to see a different pattern of results. Based on my pilot study, I preregistered the prediction that I would see a Question Order x Social Issues Satisfaction x Personal Agency interaction such that those who saw the predictors first, were low in social issues satisfaction, and were low in personal agency would be Trump's strongest supporters. This pattern of results would have Trump's strongest followers fit the authoritarian profile. Instead, Study 1's data showed that question order did not matter and that participants who were high in agency and low in satisfaction were Trump's strongest supporters. This pattern better fits the dominance-seeking profile.

I can see two potential explanations for the difference between my preregistered prediction and the final results. First, the pilot sample was small at 101 participants and the results were not statistically significant but, instead, potentially unreliable trends. Thus, my preregistered predictions based on inconclusive pilot data were likely premature. Alternatively, it is possible that the political context may have simply changed between the times I collected the samples. The US Presidential election sees so much coverage and impressions may evolve as the campaigns progresses. It may be the case that early on Trump's campaign was more attractive to the authoritarians and it was not until later, as his campaign evolved and interacted with the larger election campaign, that he started being more attractive to the dominance-seekers. With this in mind, I decided to run another study to see if this new pattern replicated.

## CHAPTER 4: STUDY 2

In Study 2, I sought to replicate the results showing that high-agency, dissatisfied participants were Trump's strongest supporters, suggesting that they fit a dominance-seeking profile. Two new measures were explored, a revised version of the defense of Trump measure and an exploratory measure looking at changing perceptions of discrimination as a predictor of Trump support. I pre-registered the Study 1 pattern, that it would be the low social issues satisfaction by high personal agency group that would be Trump's strongest supporters, on the Open Science Framework.

### Method

**Participants.** Data was collected during the period of November 1-8, 2016, the week leading up to 2016 Presidential Election. On MTurk, I recruited 250 White male, American citizens, who indicated they were voting or had already voted for Trump. This last criterion differed from the previous two studies, as I specifically wanted to focus only on differences in relative levels of support within Trump-leaning voters. This sample size was chosen so that I could complete data collection quickly enough before the election completed, yet still have a large enough sample to have confidence in my results. In addition, Study 1 showed that about one third of the 581 final sample indicated they were voting for Trump and so this sample size was also an attempt to keep the samples somewhat comparable in size.

Participants were compensated \$0.60 USD for completing the study. Analyses excluded 13 participants from analysis who did not complete at least half of the items in their entirety, who indicated that they did want their data used for analyses, or who expressed difficulty answering the items. The final sample consisted of 237 participants ( $M_{age} = 38.0$  years,  $SD_{age} = 11.7$ ;  $M_{Income}$

*Bracket* = \$35,001 - \$50,000; 61% had at least a college degree, see Table 1 for complete demographics).

**Procedure and Materials.** Participants were invited to participate in my study on MTurk. The HIT was described the same way as the previous studies. Prospective participants first filled out demographics (identical to Study 1) and a screening questionnaire. Those who were White male, American citizens, and who indicated they would be or had already voted for Trump were allowed to proceed with the rest of the study. Those who did not meet these requirements were dismissed from the study. Similar to Study 1, participants read an information letter, provided consent to have their data analyzed, then had to pass an instructional manipulation check before proceeding with the survey items. A few other measures present in this study were not analyzed for the purpose of this paper.<sup>4</sup>

**Predictor Variables.** Identical to Study 1, participants answered a 15-item trait personal agency scale ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ,  $\alpha = .93$ ). A slightly abbreviated form of the social issues satisfaction scale (13 items) was also filled out ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ,  $\alpha = .88$ ). This measure had fewer items because I wished to shorten the overall survey. In addition, the items that were removed did not seem to be major issues Trump was emphasizing in his campaign (Education; Poverty, Hunger and Homelessness; Religious Rights; Environment and Climate Change).

A new measure was introduced that assessed the perception of changes in discrimination. I used a measure created by Norton and Sommers (2011) where participants are asked “Thinking about the following time periods, to what extent do you think Whites were (are) the target of discrimination?” Participants answered this question on a 1 (*Not at all*) to 10 (*Very much*) scale,

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<sup>4</sup> These included measures of participants’ general, financial, and relationship satisfaction; perceived personal ability to influence government; and perceptions of how they thought Trump would benefit America

with regards to each successive decade starting with the 1950s up to the present decade. Participants then repeated this same measure, this time thinking about discrimination against Blacks instead of Whites.

*Dependent Measure.* The sole dependent measure in Study 2 was the defense of Trump scale, but with a new scenario. The previous scenario used in the Pilot Study and Study 1 had to do with Trump being blocked as the Republican candidate during the Republican National Convention. Given the time when this current study was run, that is, the week leading up to Election Day, this scenario was no longer relevant. Instead, a new scenario was used that once again reflected real life circumstances at the time (Kelsey, 2016). The scenario read:

As you may have heard, Donald Trump and many of his supporters have expressed doubt about the integrity of the voting process this election. Concerns include widespread voter fraud, electoral tampering, biased coverage by the media, and biased election officials. Because of these concerns Trump has said that he isn't sure he will be able to accept the results of the election.

Suppose Donald Trump loses the presidential election and chooses not to concede the victory to Hillary Clinton. Instead, in a nationally televised speech, he cites voter fraud, a rigged system, and widespread irregularities as the reasons for the loss. He then urges Americans to stand up to the corrupt system and demonstrate their displeasure any way they can.

After reading the scenario, participants reported their willingness to participate in various protest actions in defense of Trump. For the most part, the same items were used as in Study 1, with a few of them being rephrased to reflect the new scenario (e.g., "I would support protestors who try to block Hillary Clinton's inauguration" replaced "I would actively hinder or sabotage the

rest of the election process”). As a very last step, participants were asked if there was any reason they felt their data should not be used and read a feedback letter explaining the purpose of the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

I ran a multiple regression model with personal agency, social issues satisfaction, and their interaction as predictors for the defense of Trump measure (see Figure 6 and Table 8). These predictor variables were centred by generating standardized z-scores. Unlike Study 1 where I restricted analysis to only self-identified Republicans, all participants were used in this analysis as they had all already indicated they were voting for or had already voted for Trump and so were likely to strongly consider supporting him with these protest actions. The overall model was marginally significant,  $F(3, 236) = 2.09, p = .103, adjusted R^2 = .01$ . A significant interaction was found,  $\beta = -.16, t(236) = -2.44, p = .015$ . Simple effects tests at +1 *SD* personal agency were in line with my predictions. Those who were highly agentic, and were also relatively lower in their satisfaction indicated the highest intentions to defend Trump,  $\beta = -.19, t(236) = -2.07, p = .039$ . For those who were low in satisfaction at -1 *SD*, there was a non-significant difference between those at high and low levels of personal agency,  $\beta = .12, t(236) = 1.39, p = .165$ , however, the slope was trending in the expected direction. No main effects emerged. This result seems to partially replicate the results I saw in Study 1. It appears that there is a stronger desire to want to support Trump among participants’ whose motivations fit the dominance-seeking profile.

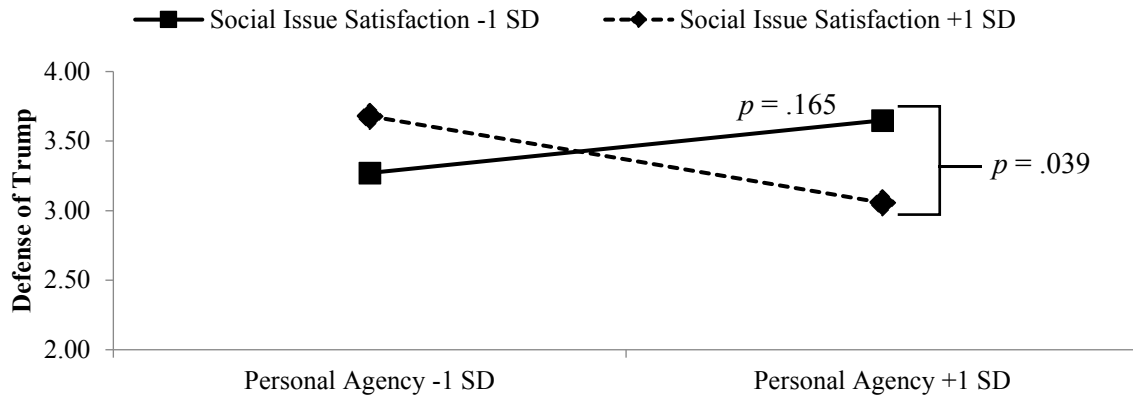


Figure 6. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting defense of Trump (Study 2).

I conducted an exploratory analysis with the measures of changes in discrimination (CID) predicting defense of Trump. Examining the mean scores of these measures reveals an interesting pattern (see Table 6). Recall the sample for Study 2 consisted of White male, American Trump voters only. Of this sample, the general trend was to think discrimination towards Whites has been on the rise over the decades, with the reverse perception of trends for discrimination towards Blacks. Participants on average also thought discrimination towards Whites today is greater than discrimination towards Blacks today, and at a level close to discrimination towards Blacks in the 1980s.

Table 6

*Perceived Extent of Discrimination by Time Period and Target Race (Study 2)*

	1950s (B)	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010 to present (A)	CID (A - B)
<b>Whites</b>	1.99 (1.80)	2.25 (1.82)	2.76 (2.03)	3.35 (2.26)	4.10 (2.53)	5.23 (2.74)	6.77 (2.87)	4.78 (3.30)
<b>Blacks</b>	8.72 (1.78)	8.34 (1.83)	7.28 (2.02)	6.21 (2.21)	5.26 (2.36)	4.57 (2.46)	4.25 (2.64)	-4.47 (3.13)

Note: CID = Changes in Discrimination, Mean and (SD) on a 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very much) scale

To further probe this finding, I calculated two difference scores for each participant by taking perceived discrimination towards Whites in the present decade and subtracting perceived



discrimination towards Whites in the 1950s scores and then calculated the comparable difference score for perceived discrimination against Blacks. These difference scores thus respectively captured perceived change in discrimination towards Whites (CID towards Whites) and towards Blacks (CID towards Blacks). A positive difference score would indicate the participant feels like discrimination towards the target group is a bigger problem today than it was in 1950s. A negative difference score would indicate they feel discrimination towards the target group is less of an issue today than it was in the 1950s. The measures of perceived CID towards Whites and perceived CID towards Blacks were significantly negatively correlated at  $-.39$ , which indicates a general tendency to perceive a zero-sum pattern in status for Whites and Blacks (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables (Study 2)*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Social Issues Satisfaction	--			
2. Personal Agency	-.21**	--		
3. CID towards Whites	-.37**	.19**	--	
4. CID toward Blacks	.28**	-.19**	-.39**	--
5. Defense of Trump	-.03	-.02	.23**	-.05

*Note:* CID = Changes in Discrimination

\*\* $p < .01$

I next ran a regression model containing the CID towards Whites score, the CID towards Blacks score, personal agency, and all the interaction terms. These predictor variables were centred by generating standardized z-scores. Overall, the model was significant,  $F(7, 237) = 6.36, p < .001$ , with an  $R^2 = 0.16$ . Though I did not observe a significant 3-way interaction,  $p = .294$ , there were significant 2-way interactions. The CID towards Whites x CID towards Blacks interaction was significant,  $p = .001$ , as was the CID towards Whites x personal agency interaction,  $p = .007$ . With this in mind, I further explored these two, 2-way interactions.

I ran a regression model containing CID towards Whites, CID towards Blacks, and their interaction predicting defense of Trump (see Figure 7 and Table 8). Overall, the model was significant,  $F(3, 237) = 11.30, p < .001, adjusted R^2 = .12$ . There was a main effect of CID towards Whites such that participants who thought discrimination towards Whites was becoming a worse problem were on average more likely to defend Trump,  $\beta = .44, t(237) = 4.29, p < 0.001$ . There was no main effect of CID towards Blacks,  $\beta = .10, t(237) = 0.95, p = .344$ , but there was a significant interaction,  $\beta = -.41, t(237) = -4.42, p < .001$ . Simple slopes tests showed that among those who felt discrimination towards Whites was becoming worse, higher willingness to support Trump was associated with thinking that discrimination towards Blacks was becoming less of a problem,  $\beta = -.31, t(237) = -2.36, p = .019$ . Similarly, among those who felt discrimination towards Blacks was becoming less of a problem, thinking that discrimination towards Whites was becoming worse predicted higher willingness to support Trump,  $\beta = .85, t(237) = 5.75, p < .001$ .

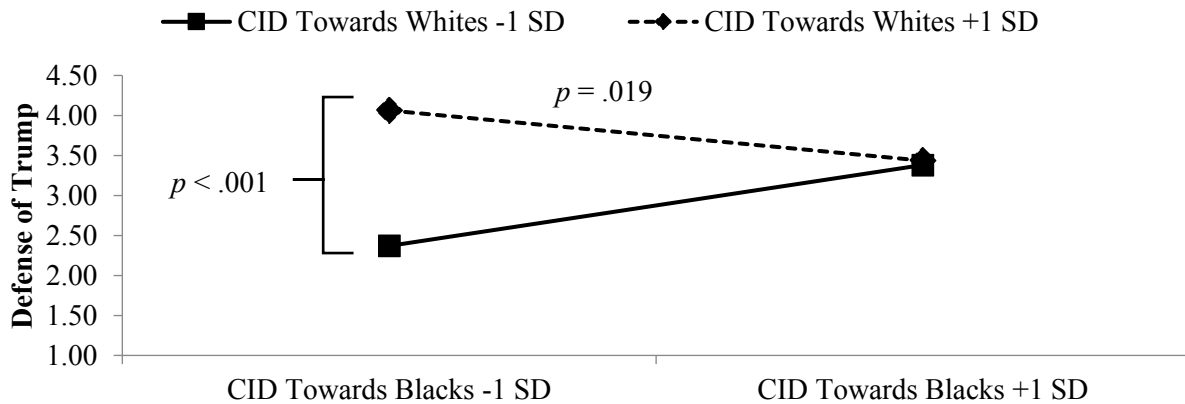


Figure 7. Changes in Discrimination (CID) Towards Whites and CID Towards Blacks predicting defense of Trump (Study 2).

I then ran a regression model containing CID towards Whites, personal agency, and their interaction (see Figure 8 and Table 8). Overall, the model was significant,  $F(3, 237) = 10.66, p <$

.001, *adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .10. There was a main effect of CID towards Whites such that participants who thought discrimination towards Whites was getting worse were on average more likely to defend Trump,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $t(237) = 4.08$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was no main effect of personal agency,  $\beta = -.09$ ,  $t(236) = -0.96$ ,  $p = .338$ , but there was a significant interaction,  $\beta = .37$ ,  $t(237) = 4.13$ ,  $p < .001$ . Tests of simple slopes showed that for those at +1 *SD* personal agency, if they also felt that discrimination towards Whites has been on the rise they were more likely to want to defend Trump,  $\beta = -.23$ ,  $t(237) = -5.639$ ,  $p < .001$ , compared to if they thought discrimination was now less of a problem. At the same time, if a participant felt that discrimination was becoming worse toward Whites and they were also high in personal agency, they supported Trump more as well,  $\beta = .27$ ,  $t(237) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .038$ , compared to those who were low in personal agency.

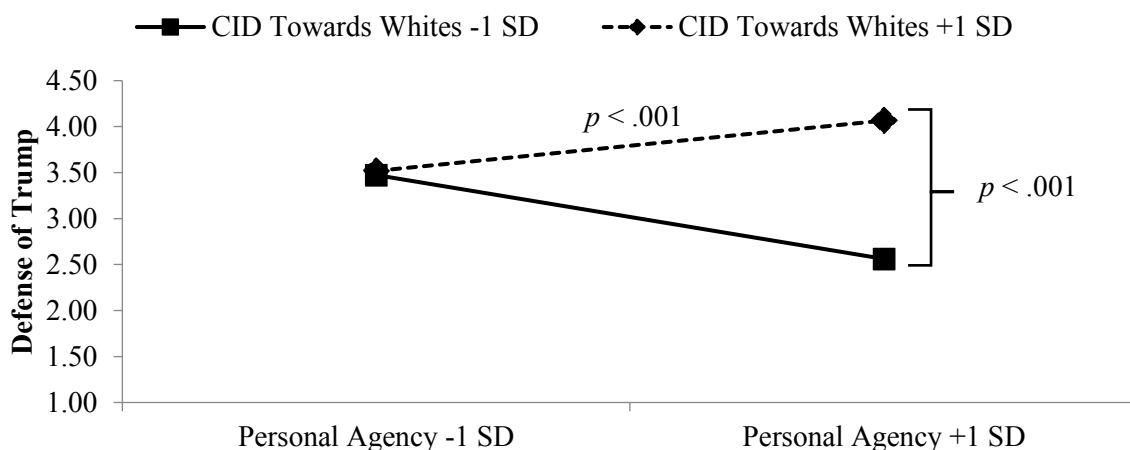


Figure 8. Changes in Discrimination (CID) Towards Whites and personal agency predicting defense of Trump (Study 2).

These two patterns of results fit well with the idea that part of Trump’s appeal is related to dominance-seeking motivations. Recall that one of the primary motivations of this group is to be on top and demonstrate superiority. Also, keep in mind that the sample for Study 2 comprised entirely of White male, American, Trump voters. These results illustrate that amongst these

Trump voters, it is those who feel like their group has been getting the raw deal as of late that are jumping up to defend Trump the most. If they see discrimination getting worse for their group and becoming less of a problem for Blacks, they are more likely to endorse protest actions for Trump. Similarly, if they see discrimination towards their group as getting worse and they are highly agentic, they are also highly eager to defend Trump. This last finding is perhaps a little more meaningful, especially since Blacks were not necessarily the outgroup that was most salient for these participants, given that concerns about Mexican immigration were much more strongly emphasized in the campaign. These results support my hypothesis that dominance-seekers would be particularly motivated to support Trump if they felt that their own group was being unfairly treated.

Table 8

*Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Trump Support from Social Issues Satisfaction and Personal Agency (Study 2)*

Variable	B(SE)	t	95% Confidence Intervals	
			Lower	Upper
<b>Defense of Trump</b>				
Social Issues Satisfaction	-.05 (.10)	-0.46	-.24	.15
Personal Agency	-.06 (.10)	-.60	-.26	.14
Interaction	-.25 (.10)	-2.44*	-.45	-.05
<b>Defense of Trump</b>				
CID towards Whites	.44 (.10)	4.28***	.24	.64
CID towards Blacks	.10 (.10)	.95	-.10	.29
Interaction	-.41 (.09)	-4.42***	-.59	-.23
<b>Defense of Trump</b>				
CID toward Whites	.39 (.09)	4.08***	.20	.57
Personal Agency	-.09 (.09)	-.96	-.28	.10
Interaction	.36 (.09)	4.13***	.19	.54

CID = Changes in Discrimination

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

## CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

In two studies, a clear pattern of results emerged that sheds light on how Trump's campaign may have garnered such enthusiastic support. Following theories on the motivations of supporters of reactionary populist movements, Trump's campaign and messages seems to have resonated the most with dominance-seekers. This group is characterized by having a preoccupation with power, and the need to gain and maintain status in a world they view as a competitive jungle. I operationalized this dominance-seeking profile as one that would have high personal agency and low social issues satisfaction.

In Study 1, we saw a consistent main effect of social issues satisfaction across four measures such that those who were relatively more dissatisfied were more likely to support Trump over other candidates. This finding is in line with the argument that reactionary populist movements arise because of rising frustrations with the status quo imposed by those currently in power. This main effect, however, was further qualified by a significant interaction. Simple effects tests showed that it was that profile of dominance-seekers, that is, those who were high in personal agency and low in social issues satisfaction, who were more likely to vote for Trump over other candidates; were more dedicated to voting for him should barriers arise on Election Day; were more willing to wait in line to vote for him, were more likely to want to support and follow his campaign; and were more willing to engage in protest actions in his name. This last measure was further replicated in Study 2.

In addition, exploratory measures in Study 2 that looked at participants' perceptions of the changing state of discrimination showed that those who felt things were getting worse for their ingroup but better for an outgroup were supporting Trump more. Similarly, thinking that things were getting worse for your ingroup in tandem with high personal agency also predicted higher Trump support. These two exploratory findings lend evidence to the association between

perceived falling status and support of Donald Trump. Loss of status is a very potent motivator for dominance-seekers and so these findings are more evidence that Trump may appealed particularly to this group.

These results overall are perhaps a bit surprising, especially given the long history of thinking that reactionary populist movements tend to mobilize those who have personal psychological insecurities and motivational deficiencies. Perhaps the most influential proponent of this perspective was the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche whose thesis on resentment argued that populist revolts arise when the normally meek masses can no longer stand the oppression heaped on them by the elites (Nietzsche, 1887). This thinking was echoed in research on fascism and authoritarians (Adorno et al., 1950; Fromm, 1941) and more recently with research on system justification (Jost & Banaji, 1994) and compensatory control (Kay et al., 2008). What these theories all have in common is the connection between personal insecurities and the tendency to attach oneself to powerful entities who can vicariously compensate for them (Kay & Eibach, 2013).

This long tradition of scholarship led me to initially hypothesize that Donald Trump's most recent reactionary populist campaign would most appeal to the same profile of supporters, which I operationalized as low personal agency and low social issues satisfaction. In contrast to this, I found that Trump's strongest supporters were high personal agency and low social issues satisfaction. This follows relatively more modern theories on populist movements which argues that a second profile of supporter exists, one that is primarily concerned about attaining and maintaining personal and group power (Duckitt, 2001; Pratto et al., 1994). These results highlight the possibility that reactionary populist movements have the potential to be misunderstood or mischaracterized if we rely purely on the historical and prototypical profile of

the authoritarian to understand the motivations behind the movement. To obtain a more complete understanding we should also strongly consider taking into account the possible contribution that dominance-seeking motives might make to fueling support for populist movements like Trump's.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this research was with the sample I studied. My sample includes only White male, American citizens from MTurk and this demographic is not a representative of American voters as a whole. Therefore, my results should be interpreted with caution and one should take care when trying to generalize from them to describe the broader population of the U.S. In a more representative sample of voters, I may have seen individuals fitting the more traditional authoritarian profile of low agency and low satisfaction emerging as Trump's most committed supporters and so my results by no means rule out the possibility that Trump may have engaged the support of authoritarians. Still, I think my results are noteworthy in suggesting that his campaign, and perhaps other reactionary movements, might have the potential to also energize the support of high-agency, low-satisfaction individuals who better fit a dominance-seeking profile.

Another limitation of this research concerns my choices in operationalizing the motivations relevant to authoritarianism and dominance-seeking. To the best of my knowledge, the way I profiled these groups is unique and therefore require further validation. It would be a good idea to see how my measures stack up against more direct and established measures of authoritarianism and dominance-seeking. For example, the right wing authoritarianism (RWA) (Altemeyer, 1981) and social dominance orientation (SDO) scales (Pratto et al., 1994) are well established measures of conservative attitudes. That being said, in my work I intentionally did not include these scales as I wanted to get a measure of motivation and ideology that was a little

farther removed from carrying overt political content. I did this to remove the odds of impression management or social desirability, which have been argued in past research on political ideology can be problems when measures use longer propositional statements like the RWA and SDO scales use (Rokeach, 1956; Wilson & Patterson, 1968). That is why my current measure of social issues satisfaction simply asks to what degree participants are satisfied with social issues and does not ask for reasons why they feel that way. That being said, to gain more confidence in my findings I could always do a follow up study with my same predictors, but also include the RWA and SDO scales. If the same patterns hold, I would expect to see positive associations between the low-agency, low-satisfaction group with RWA scores, and the high-agency, low-satisfaction group with SDO scores.

Alternatively, I could ask participants why they are dissatisfied with certain social issues. The same social issue can elicit dissatisfaction for different reasons. For example, a person may be dissatisfied with immigrants because they are afraid it will lead to a dilution of the host culture (authoritarian concern), or they can be afraid it will lead to more competition for resources (dominance-seeking concern). My study did not make this distinction, but instead categorized participants as relatively more authoritarian or more dominance-seeking based on their personal agency score. If I ask the reasons for dissatisfaction they could be content coded to see if they fit either profile. An authoritarian's dissatisfaction would be concerned with danger or the threat of disorder. A dominance-seeker's dissatisfaction would be more concerned with increased competition making it hard for them to gain power and status. One concern with this approach, however, is with the accuracy of participants in reporting why they are dissatisfied (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). In the pilot study, I additionally asked participants for reasons why they would or would not vote for Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. For several participants,



they simply listed responses that echoed media soundbites and talking points. This makes me call into question whether they strongly and personally endorse the reasons they listed, or if they are just trying to list as many reasons as possible. I would have to carefully construct my questions to avoid this potential problem.

One question that arose in meetings with colleagues was whether my measure of social issues satisfaction was simply a proxy for liberal or conservative political leanings. Indeed, this makes sense as the incumbent party during the election was the Democratic Party and Trump belonged to the Republicans. It is possible then that high satisfaction is just a reflection of being more liberal and low satisfaction of being more conservative. To address this concern, I returned to Study 1's data and took the social issues satisfaction scores and residualized it on the participants' self-ratings of liberal vs. conservative affiliation (-3 *Very liberal* to +3 *Very conservative*). On all five of the dependent measures (voting intentions, voting dedication, voting time, campaign support, and defense of Trump), the interaction pattern and relevant simple effects did not change or lose significance. This indicates to me that my social issues satisfaction variable is capturing something beyond just partisan attitudes and, in conjunction with personal agency, can uniquely predict support for Donald Trump.

## **Conclusion**

The results from the present Master's thesis suggest that voters driven by dominance-seeking motivations may have been particularly attracted to Donald Trump. This group is typically motivated by a desire to obtain power for themselves and their group, and they become concerned when barriers block this. Some of Trump's major campaign themes emphasized how America had been losing status to other countries and empowering undeserving groups within America. Trump also claimed that he alone could reverse these worrisome trends. These themes

may have resonated with dominance-seeking voters and effectively mobilized their motivation to back Trump's campaign. This finding is a little surprising in that other similar movements have been historically understood to attract a different profile of followers, that is, authoritarians who are motivated to seek powerful leaders who can compensate for their own personal insecurities. This research thus makes the argument that we should not make assumptions based on historical precedent when trying to assess motivations behind political movements, but rather we should always remain skeptical and test alternative theories and models.

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## Appendix A – Pilot Study Results

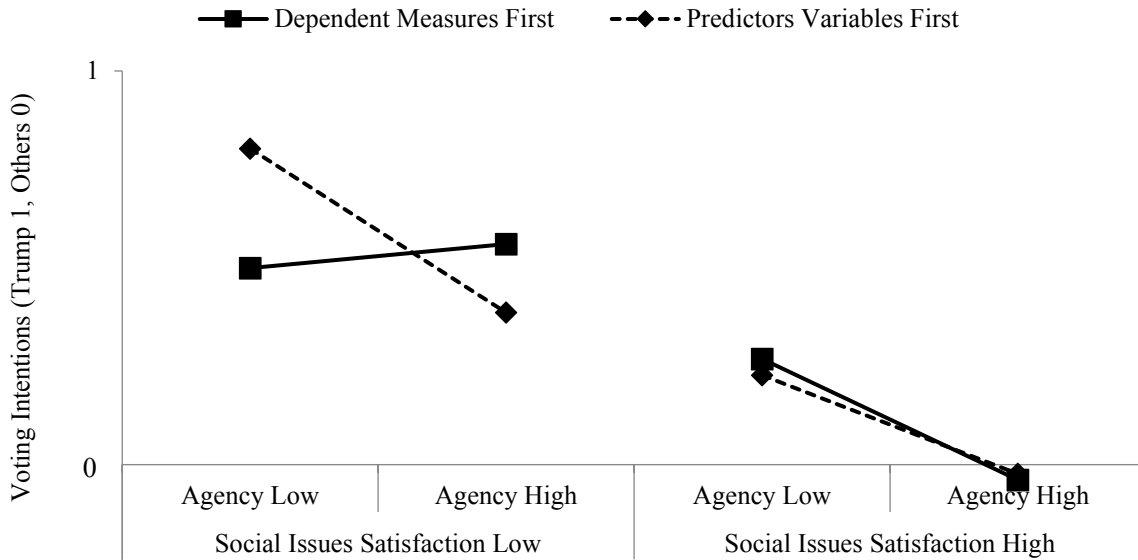


Figure 9. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting voting intentions (Pilot Study).

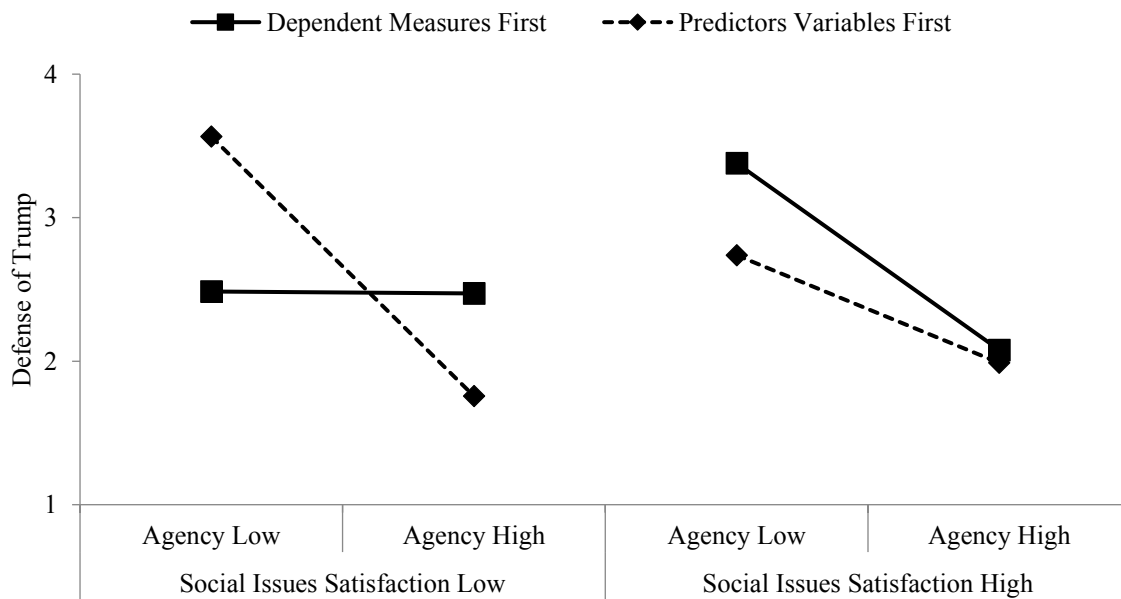


Figure 10. Personal agency and social issues satisfaction predicting defense of Trump (Pilot Study).