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PEOPLE REMEMBER LIKED POLITICAL POLICIES AS HAVING BEEN ATTRIBUTED
TO THEIR OWN PARTY

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science

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PEOPLE REMEMBER LIKED POLITICAL POLICIES AS HAVING BEEN ATTRIBUTED
TO THEIR OWN PARTY

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ABSTRACT

PEOPLE REMEMBER LIKED POLITICAL POLICIES AS HAVING BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THEIR OWN PARTY

A robust finding in psychology shows that people tend to like information more when it supports their existing beliefs, or comes from their own ingroup, a finding known as motivated reasoning. These findings are especially prominent in a political context. Quite consistently, research suggests people increase their liking of political information like political policies when they are attributed to their own party. What is unknown, however, is if people also tend to attribute personally liked information to their own party. These studies were conducted to investigate this question.

Two, within-subjects studies were conducted. In both, participants (undergraduate students) saw various political policies and indicated their liking for each. After a delay, the policies were randomly attributed to either the Democrat or Republican party and participants indicated their liking for each again. After another delay, participants saw all policies again in the context of a memory task. For each policy, participants indicated which party they remembered it was attributed to and their confidence in that memory. Participants also responded to items that measured their political sophistication, political identity fusion, and political identity investment. Collectively, the results of the study provided evidence that people remembered personally liked policies as being attributed to their own party. It also suggests that political sophistication may moderate this effect in some fashion. Finally, people seemed to increase their liking for policies that were attributed to their own party and decrease their liking for policies attributed to the opposing party.

Keywords: Memory, Motivated Reasoning, Social Identity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Introduction.....	1
Study 1	9
Method	10
Results.....	13
Discussion	22
Rationale for Second Study	23
Pilot Study – Policy Neutrality	25
Method	25
Results.....	26
Discussion	28
Study 2	28
Moderating Variables.....	28
Political Sophistication	28
Partisan Identity Fusion	29
Social Identity Investment.....	30
Method	32
Results.....	37

Discussion	47
General Discussion	50
Conclusion	54
References	55
Appendix A: Study 1	61
Appendix B: Pilot Study	62
Appendix C: Study 2	64
Appendix D: IRB Consent Form	64
Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter	64

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Memory for Policy Attribution Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology – Democrat Attributed Policies.....15

Table 2. Memory for Policy Attribution Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology – Republican Attributed Policies.....17

Table 3. Democrat Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology..19

Table 4. Republican Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology21

Table 5. Policies and Characteristics of Block 1.....27

Table 6. Policies and Characteristics of Block 2.....27

Table 7. Memory for Policy Attribution Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology – Democrat Attributed Policies.....39

Table 8. Democrat Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology..42

Table 9. Republican Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology44

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Distribution of Political Ideology for Study 1.....	10
Figure 2. Memory for Policy Attribution – Democrat Attributed Policies.....	16
Figure 3. Memory for Policy Attribution – Republican Attributed Policies.....	18
Figure 4. Attributed Policy Liking – Democrat Attributed Policies.....	20
Figure 5. Attributed Policy Liking – Republican Attributed Policies.....	21
Figure 6. Distribution of Political Ideology for Study 2.....	33
Figure 7. Memory for Policy Attribution – Democrat Attributed Policies.....	40
Figure 8. Memory for Policy Attribution – Republican Attributed Policies.....	41
Figure 9. Attributed Policy Liking – Democrat Attributed Policies.....	43
Figure 10. Attributed Policy Liking – Republican Attributed Policies.....	44
Figure 11. Political Sophistication Moderation – Democrat Attributed Policies.....	46
Figure 12. Political Sophistication Moderation – Republican Attributed Policies.....	47

Introduction

The theory of motivated reasoning posits that when people are presented information, a subconscious process takes place that can alter opinions. Rather than strictly evaluating information, people also consider whether the information supports their group, social identity, and/or beliefs (Taber & Lodge, 2016), which can have a biasing influence in almost every type of reasoning (Kraft et al., 2015; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Druckman and McGrath (2019) suggest that people can be motivated to come to conclusions that support their existing beliefs (ideological motivation) or motivated to come to conclusions that are accurate, regardless of their existing beliefs (accuracy motivation). However, even accuracy motivation can be biased, as people may have a biased opinion on what is “accurate.” For instance, a liberal may consider information from CNN as accurate, and information from Fox News as inaccurate, without properly evaluating the content provided (Druckman & McGrath, 2019).

Various research demonstrates the ubiquity of motivated reasoning. People have been shown to be motivated to question negative outcomes but accept positive outcomes at face value. For instance, people tend to doubt the efficacy of a medical test that indicates that they have a fictitious disease, but if the same test indicates they do not have a disease, they are more willing to take the results at face value (Ditto et al., 2003). Motivated reasoning is also used in other self-serving ways. Sinclair and Kunda (1999) found that, when interacting with various Black professionals (e.g., doctor, manager, evaluator), participants often inhibited stereotypes about the professionals depending on how they perceived the interaction went. If they felt the interaction was positive, people tended to activate the professional stereotypes and inhibit the “Black” stereotypes; if it was a negative interaction, they did the opposite.

Motivated reasoning is especially prominent in the political realm. With respect to how motivated reasoning has been examined in the arena of politics, two common paradigms look either at how ideologically congruent/incongruent information is viewed, or at how neutral information attributed to one's ideological ingroup/outgroup is viewed. In both cases, ideologically congruent information is preferred and otherwise evaluated more positively. Taber and Lodge (2006) found that people rate arguments that support their existing beliefs as stronger than arguments that oppose their beliefs, even if those arguments are objectively of similar strength. They also found that people spent more time processing belief-challenging arguments, possibly because they were forming strong arguments against them (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Similarly, research has found that people tend to seek out information that supports their existing political beliefs, selecting it more than belief-challenging information (Graf & Aday, 2008; Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2020). This finding is commonly known as confirmation bias, the tendency to seek out and attend to information that confirms one's existing beliefs. Confirmation bias is found in several different avenues of research. For example, people that prefer healthiness over tastiness in food selections tend to seek out videos that promote healthy food preferences, as well as rate health promoting arguments as stronger than arguments promoting tastiness (Dickinson & Kakoschke, 2021).

Motivated reasoning extends into other aspects of the political world, such as conspiracy theories. One study found that conspiracy theories were rated as more believable when they were congruent with the participant's ideology, as opposed to ideologically incongruent conspiracies (Miller et al., 2016). A specific example of this is election fraud conspiracy theories, where both liberals and conservatives were more likely to endorse theories when they implicated the opposing party (Edelson et al., 2017). Similar findings were also found in research on climate

change, in which participants were more likely to deny scientific findings if they disconfirmed existing climate change beliefs (Washburn & Skitka, 2018). Collectively, this research supports the idea that people reason with information in motivated ways to support their own political beliefs and party.

Considering how neutral information attributed to one's ideological ingroup is viewed, research in this area shows that ingroup attribution boosts evaluation of the information, relative to unattributed information. Bolsen et al. (2014) presented ideologically neutral policies to participants with either no attribution, attribution to the Republicans, or attribution to the Democrats. They found that policies attributed to a participant's ingroup party received more support than a policy with no attribution, while policies attributed to the opposing party received decreased support relative to non-attributed policies.

Similar findings appear in studies examining the concept of reactive devaluation. In research on this concept, participants' liking of policy proposals is driven by which party or group the proposals are attributed to. For example, both Israelis and Palestinians were more likely to reject a peace proposal when attributed to the opposing group, but more likely to accept and support the same proposal when attributed to their own group, as compared to control groups where the policy was presented without attribution (Maoz et al., 2002). This offers strong support to the idea that people evaluate information in the context of where it comes from and whether it is consistent with their pre-existing beliefs, not simply the content in the information.

Although much research demonstrates an increased preference for ideologically consistent information, as well as increased liking for ingroup attributed information, research does not yet show whether people also attribute personally liked information to their own groups. That is, it is known that people like information that is consistent with their own ideology, and

that people like information more if they believe it came from their own group. What is unknown is whether a liking of unattributed neutral information will make people think their own group proposed it. If people initially like a neutral political stimulus, will they believe their own party proposed it, regardless of actual attribution? Social identity theory suggests that this may be the case.

Historically, social identity theory research has shown that people exhibit a clear preference for their ingroup compared to the outgroup (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel et al., 1971). In a review of literature, Hewstone et al. (2002) discuss evidence that people tend to show an inherent ingroup favoritism, including an increased trust, positive regard, and empathy to ingroup members. They also suggest that people tend to show outgroup derogation, with negative emotions toward outgroup members such as disgust, contempt, and anger. A more recent review from Everett et al. (2015) argues that ingroup favoritism may be driving biases toward the ingroup, which sometimes may contribute to outgroup derogation (e.g., zero-sum conflicts). A study that exemplifies these effects was conducted by Johnson et al. (2012). They found that as Christian identification increased, people tended to show increased liking toward value-consistent ingroups (ingroup favoritism) and increased disliking for value-violating outgroups (outgroup derogation).

So, social identity theory suggests people inherently like their ingroup and see it, and its members, positively, while they may also have inherent disdain for the opposing group. The motivated reasoning literature is broadly consistent with this. It suggests that people also show increased liking for information attributed to the ingroup, and decreased liking for outgroup-attributed information. In other words, if something comes from the ingroup, it must be good; if it comes from the outgroup, it must be bad. One implication of this thinking is that if a person

likes information, such as a neutral political policy, they may tend to remember it coming from the “good” ingroup. If they dislike that information, they may remember it as coming from the “bad” outgroup. Furthermore, it appears this finding would be largely consistent with existing schematic memory research.

Schemas are cognitive structures that people use to represent useful characteristics of concepts and can be quite influential in memory (Alba & Hasher, 1983). Research into schematic memory is quite prevalent, however often produces somewhat contradictory findings. One study found that people recalled the actions of an individual better when they contradicted how the individual was described (Pryor et al., 1986). Similarly, Yamada and Itsukushima (2013) found that people recalled household objects better when they were used in schematically inconsistent ways compared to consistent ways (e.g., a dinner plate is better remembered when somebody used it like a phone). However, they also found consistent and inconsistent actions (e.g., sitting on a chair; using the phone to cook dinner) were remembered equally, a somewhat contradictory finding. Stern et al. (1984) also found that inconsistent and consistent actions of individuals and groups were remembered at similar rates, and both were remembered better than irrelevant neutral information. Lodge and Hamill (1986) provide additional contradictory evidence in the political realm. In their study, Lodge and Hamill created a fake politician, assigned them a Democrat or Republican identifier, and designed a hypothetical policy book containing 30 policies consistent with the ideology of the politician, and 10 inconsistent policies. After participants looked through the policy book and completed a distractor task, a surprise memory task was presented. This memory task showed 20 old policies that were in the policy book and 20 new policies, half of which were schema-consistent and half schema-inconsistent. They found that when people were not very knowledgeable on politics, they remembered consistent and

inconsistent policies at the same rate. Highly knowledgeable participants, however, tended to remember consistent policies better than inconsistent.

One factor that may contribute to these contradicting findings is the difficulty of the recall task. Difficult tasks require more cognitive effort to successfully complete. Research has shown that when people have access to schemas (and stereotypes), they often use them to decrease the cognitive effort used in recall (Macrae et al., 1994) or problem solving (Wang et al., 2018). This is incredibly useful when the information provided is consistent with existing schemas but can be problematic when the information is not. Recall that Lodge and Hamill (1986) had participants learn 40 different policies, a quite demanding task, while intermixing schema consistent and inconsistent policies. The demanding nature of the task could explain why consistent policies were remembered better than inconsistent; schemas were relied upon to lower cognitive effort and led to an improved memory for policies that were consistent with the politician's ideology. If all 40 policies were ideologically consistent, they might have been remembered quite well. Another factor that may contribute to these contradicting findings is timing; the longer the delay before recall, the more people may rely on schemas in the memory task. Kleider et al. (2008) support this idea, finding that in an immediate memory task, people remembered consistent and inconsistent actions at a similar rate. When the test was delayed for two days, consistent actions were remembered better than inconsistent ones. This timing issue was considered while developing the current studies.

In the described schema studies, only one was political (Lodge & Hamill, 1986), and it utilized policies that were politically charged and clearly fit into existing schemas of the major political parties. Can neutral political policies also fit into existing political schemas? They might if a person's own attitudes or evaluations of the policy are considered. Due to the nature of

politics, a schema for each political party might also include general positive and negative feelings for each group. The previously reviewed social identity theory literature does suggest people often form inherent positive feelings for the ingroup and outgroup negativity (Everett et al., 2015; Hewstone et al., 2002). A conservative could form schemas that suggest Republicans tend to have positive policies and Democrats tend to have negative policies (and vice versa for liberals). If this is the case, schema-consistent memory might take the form of people remembering liked policies as coming from their own party and disliked policies as coming from the opposing party.

Other literature suggests that memory can be deployed in biased ways, typically in a fashion that supports memory for information about, or coming from, ingroup members. For instance, people have been shown to remember faces of perceived ingroup members better than outgroup faces (Rule et al., 2007). People have also been shown to recall actions of ingroup members better than those of the outgroup (Greenstein et al., 2016), as well as remember information presented by ingroup members better than information presented by outgroup members (Iacozza et al., 2019). Collectively, these studies suggest that individuals have the capacity, whether knowingly or not, to deploy memory in biased ways. Research into false political memories has suggested that people even sometimes misremember political events that never actually occurred. Frenda et al. (2013) found that people tended to remember fictitious political events that implicated the opposing party in negative actions (e.g., liberals remembered George Bush going on a golfing trip immediately following Hurricane Katrina). Not only did people indicate they heard about the fabricated events, but a large proportion reported having first-hand knowledge of the fabricated events. Similarly, Coronel et al. (2014) found that people tended to misremember hypothetical politicians supporting party-consistent policies, whether the

politicians supported the policies or not. Coronel and colleagues also utilized event related potential (ERP) analysis in their study. Interestingly, they found that the ERP responses when participants misremembered a politician supporting a party-consistent policy were quite similar to ERP responses of standard, accurate memories. This suggested that participants responses went beyond educated guessing and were instead indicative of false memories.

The reviewed literature suggests that people seem to desire to remember in ways that supports their ideology, group, and existing world beliefs. This is supported by schema research (Lodge & Hamill, 1986) and other false memory research (Coronel et al., 2014; Frenda et al., 2013). There is still a noticeable gap in this literature, however. As discussed earlier, motivated reasoning research has investigated how evaluations of neutral information change when attributed to different groups (Bolsen et al., 2014; Maoz et al., 2002). To the best of my knowledge, an investigation of how evaluations of neutral political information influence memory has not been conducted. There is no definitive answer as to whether people will tend to remember liked neutral political information as having come from their own party or disliked information as having come from the opposing party. The studies in this project were conducted in an attempt to fill this gap.

To effectively answer the above question, I designed and conducted two within-subjects studies. In both studies, participants were shown neutral political policies – policies not stereotypically associated with either major political party at the time of their generation – and indicated their liking for each. After a delay, the policies were attributed to either the Democrat or Republican party and participants indicated their liking for each policy again. Then, after another delay, participants completed a surprise memory task in which they indicated which party they believed each policy was attributed to and their confidence in that assertion. I

hypothesized that when participants were asked to recall which party various political policies were attributed to, they would tend to remember policies they initially liked as coming from their preferred political party and policies they initially disliked as coming from the opposing political party. For a secondary hypothesis, I expected participants to increase their liking for political policies when attributed to their own political party and decrease their liking for political policies when attributed to the opposing political party. This hypothesis is consistent with existing motivated reasoning literature.

In the following, I describe two studies in which these hypotheses were tested. I treated the first study as a pilot study to investigate these hypotheses and lay a foundation for the preregistered second study. The second study was conducted to replicate and extend the findings of the first, making methodological improvements to address limitations observed in the initial research. Furthermore, potential moderating variables were also investigated in the second study. These variables are discussed after the findings of the first pilot study are presented.

Study 1

This initial study was conducted to test both hypotheses described above. To do this, participants were presented with 12 neutral political policies not known to be affiliated with either major American political party and indicated their liking or disliking of the policies. After 48 hours, participants returned for a second part of the study in which they were presented the policies again, this time randomly attributed to either the Democrat or Republican party. Participants again indicated their liking for the policies. After a short delay filled with unrelated distractor tasks, participants were presented with the policies a final time and asked to indicate which party they remembered the policy being attributed to, as well as their confidence in their memory.

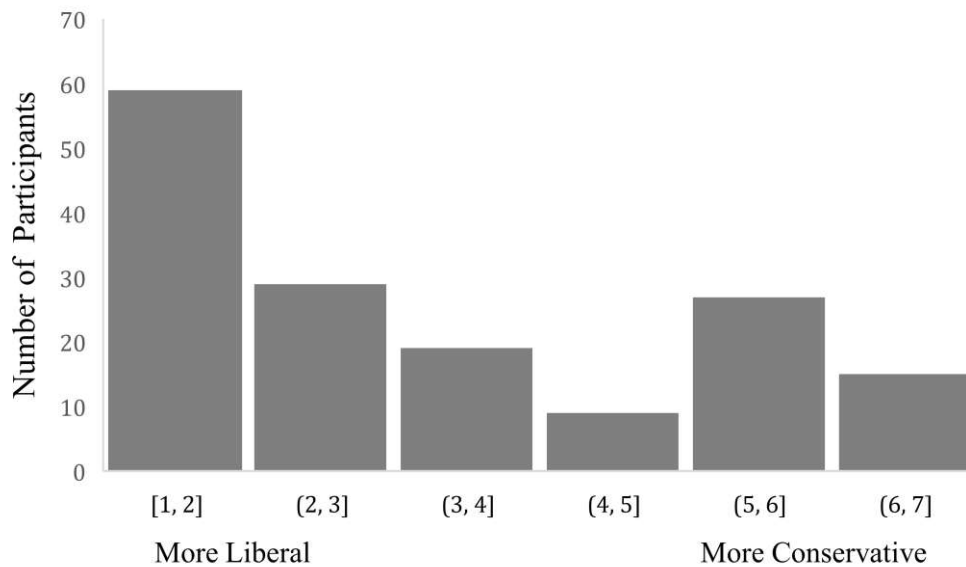
Method

Participants

The sample utilized for this initial study was comprised of undergraduate students at Western Kentucky University. All participants received partial course credit for their participation. The final sample consisted of 159 (127 female; 28 male; 4 non-binary or other) participants. The mean age for this sample was $M = 19.4$ years old ($SD = 3.01$). The sample was also liberal leaning. The distribution of the sample's political ideology is displayed in Figure 1. Four participants indicated their data should be excluded when asked at the end of the project (indicated they did not pay attention when responding in a question at the end of the questionnaire). They were excluded from analysis, leaving a final sample of 155 participants.

Figure 1

Distribution of Political Ideology in Study 1



Design

The first study had a two-part, within-subjects design using both measured and manipulated variables. There were 3 predictor variables, two of which were measured (true

liking of political policies and political ideology) and one that was manipulated (random attribution of policies to the Democrat or Republican party). For this manipulated variable, randomization was counterbalanced. Policies were randomly assigned to two blocks prior to the study (6 policies to each block). Within the study, one policy block was randomly assigned to one of the parties, and the other to the other party, separately for each participant. There were two outcome variables: attributed policy liking and memory for policy attribution.

Procedure

To administer the study, I designed a questionnaire using the online questionnaire design service Qualtrics. This questionnaire was administered to the participants via Study Board, the online research participation tool for psychological studies at Western Kentucky University. The researchers did not have any personal contact with participants, and the entire procedure was carried out online.

A two-part procedure was utilized. In part one, participants were presented with 12 hypothetical political policies. These political policies were designed to be politically neutral, meaning that either political party realistically might support them (e.g., policy to offer tax breaks to families that adopt children). A full list of the political policies can be found in Appendix A. It should be noted that there were no analyses conducted on these policies to ensure neutrality. This limitation is discussed later and addressed in the second study. Participants indicated their liking for each of these policies before the policies were attributed to a party. For future reference, this liking measure will be called the true liking score.

Forty-eight to seventy-two hours later, participants completed part two. Participants first indicated their political ideology by indicating their level of liberalism/conservatism and to what extent they identified as a Republican or Democrat. These scores made up the political ideology

score. All 12 political policies were then presented again, randomly attributed to either the Republican or Democratic party as described in the design. Respondents indicated their liking for each attributed policies, with scores referred to as the attributed policy liking.

Immediately following this attributed policy liking measure, participants completed a series of distractor tasks. Following these distractor tasks, the 12 policies were presented again in the context of a memory task. Participants indicated which party they remembered the policy had been attributed to, as well as their confidence in this assertion. This memory measure was used for the memory for policy attribution variable.

Measures

True Liking. True liking of policies was a predictor variable. All 12 political policies were presented to participants in part one of the study, unattributed to either party at the time. Participants indicated their liking of each policy by responding to a 7-point Likert scale (1: *Extremely Oppose...7: Extremely Support*). A mean score was calculated for both blocks of policies. This provided a mean true liking score for policies that would, in the next part of the study, be attributed to Republicans and another for policies that would be attributed to Democrats.

Political Ideology. Political ideology was the second predictor variable. Two self-report measures were utilized to capture this. First, participants responded to a 7-point Likert political ideology scale (1: *Very Liberal... 7: Very Conservative*). They then responded to a second 7-point Likert scale to report the extent to which they identified as a Republican or Democrat (1: *Democrat... 7: Republican*). Thus, higher scores on this scale indicated a higher level of conservatism (conservatives), while a lower score indicated a lower level of conservatism (liberals).

Memory for Policy Attribution. The main outcome variable of interest was memory for policy attribution. For this memory task, all political policies were presented, unattributed. On a 7-point Likert scale, participants recalled which political party each policy was attributed to, and how confident they were in their assertion (*1: Completely Confident Republican... 7: Completely Confident Democrat*). Mean scores were calculated for both blocks of policies. Higher scores indicate more confidence that the policies in the block were attributed to the Democrats, and lower scores indicate more confidence the policies in the block were attributed to the Republicans. This provided a mean memory for policy attribution score for policies that were attributed to Republicans, and another for policies that were attributed to Democrats.

Attributed Policy Liking. Attributed policy liking was a secondary outcome variable of interest. This was measured in the same fashion as the true liking score, but this time with knowledge of which party each policy had been randomly attributed to. Specifically, on a 7-point Likert scale, participants indicated how much they liked the policies now the policies were attributed to either the Democrats or Republicans (*1: Very good... 7: Very Bad*). Mean scores were calculated for both blocks of policies, with reverse scoring so higher scores indicated greater liking of the policies. This provided a mean attributed policy liking score for policies that were attributed to Republicans, and another for policies that were attributed to Democrats.

Results

Prior to testing the hypotheses, I computed the means and standard deviations for the true liking, attributed policy liking, and memory for policy attribution variables. The liking for policies attributed to the Democrats and Republicans was quite similar. The mean true liking for policies that would be attributed to the Democrats was $M = 5.18$ ($SD = .78$), and for to-be Republican attributed policies the mean was $M = 5.18$ ($SD = .71$). The attributed policy liking for

policies was also quite similar; for Democrat attributed policies, $M = 5.30$ ($SD = .93$) and for Republican attributed policies, $M = 5.29$ ($SD = .89$). As for memory for policy attribution, the findings suggest that people tended to be accurate in their memories. For policies that were attributed to the Democrats the mean was $M = 5.89$ ($SD = 1.12$), and for Republican attributed policies the mean was $M = 2.28$ ($SD = .89$). Thus, people tended to remember that Democrat attributed policies were attributed to the Democrats and that Republican attributed policies were attributed to the Republicans (and were quite confident in their memories).

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses. Separate analyses were conducted for the Republican and Democrat attributed policies to ensure there were no differences in effects for liberals and conservatives. If liberals tended to show the expected effect and conservatives did not, or vice versa, I wanted to be able to capture that. All variables were transformed into z-scores prior to analysis, and all relevant figures display the variables as z-scores. In all figures, political ideology is represented as scores +1 standard deviation or greater (conservatives) or -1 standard deviation or lower (liberals) on the political ideology scale. This was done to simplify the figures and allow the reader to view the figures with clear political party separations. In the regression models however, it was still treated as a continuous variable.

The focus of this project revolved around the novel memory for policy attribution measure. Memory for policy attribution was regressed on political ideology, true liking, and the interaction between them. For the Democrat attributed policies, the regression model was statistically significant ($R^2 = .073$, $F(3, 154) = 4.049$, $p < .05$). Neither true liking nor political ideology were significant predictors of the variance observed in memory for policy attribution. The interaction between the two, however, was significant. The results are displayed in Table 1. Figure 2 shows that participants tended to be more confident policies they initially liked (true

liking) were attributed to their preferred party, and they were also more confident policies they initially disliked were attributed to the opposing party. Those high in conservatism tended to remember initially liked policies were attributed to the Republicans, and initially disliked policies were attributed to the Democrats. The inverse was observed for those lower in conservatism (liberals).

Table 1

Memory for Policy Attribution Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology - Democrat

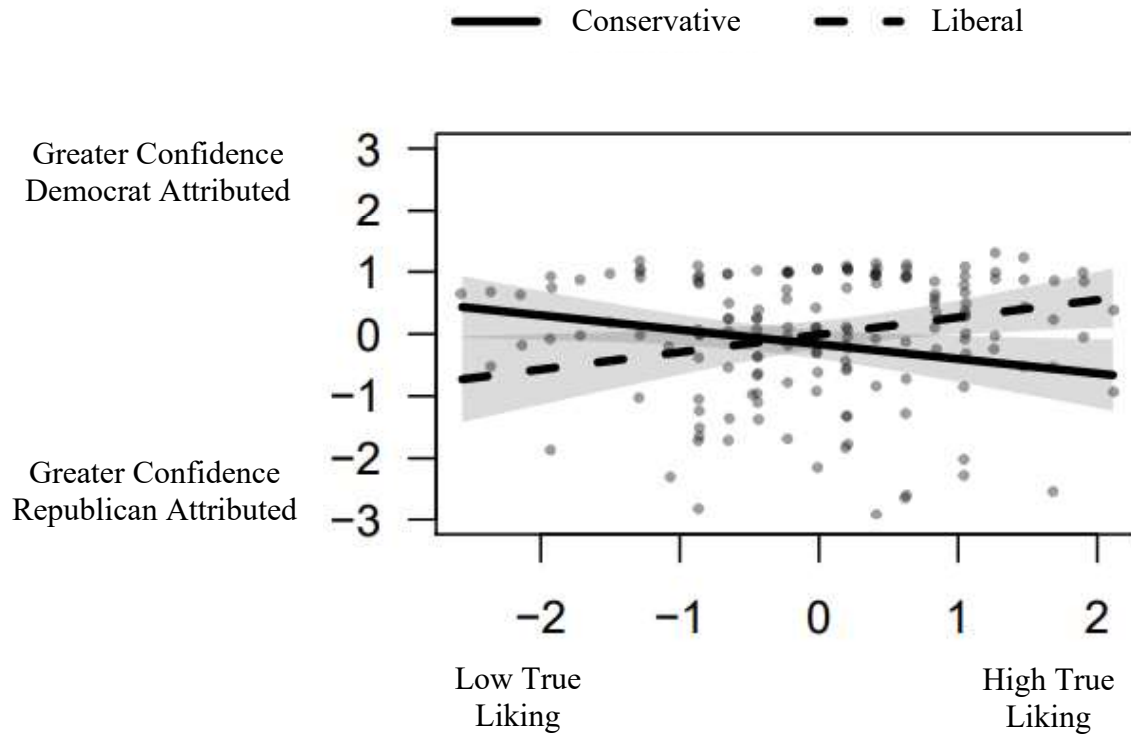
	Estimate	Std. Error	t
Intercept	-.090	.082	-1.101
True Liking	.023	.083	.273
Political Ideology	-.077	.084	-.922
True Liking X Political Ideology	-.257	.074	-3.451*

All variables transformed and analyzed as z-scores.

* $p < .05$

Figure 2

Memory for Policy Attribution - Democrat Attributed Policies



Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Democrats, while lower scores indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Republicans. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate higher levels of true liking for policies, while lower scores indicate lower liking.

As for the Republican attributed policies, similar findings were observed. The regression model was not significant ($R^2 = .047$, $F(3, 154) = 2.546$, $p = .058$). Although the model was not significant, the significance observed with the Democratic attributed policies and the similarity of the results suggest these findings are important to consider as well. Again, neither political ideology nor true liking were significant predictors of the variance observed in memory for policy attribution. The interaction between the two, however, was. The results are displayed in Table 2. The plot of this interaction is provided in Figure 3. Again, those high in conservatism

tended to remember policies they initially liked as being attributed to Republicans, and policies they disliked as coming from the Democrats. The inverse effect was observed for those low in conservatism.

Table 2

Memory for Policy Attribution Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology - Republican

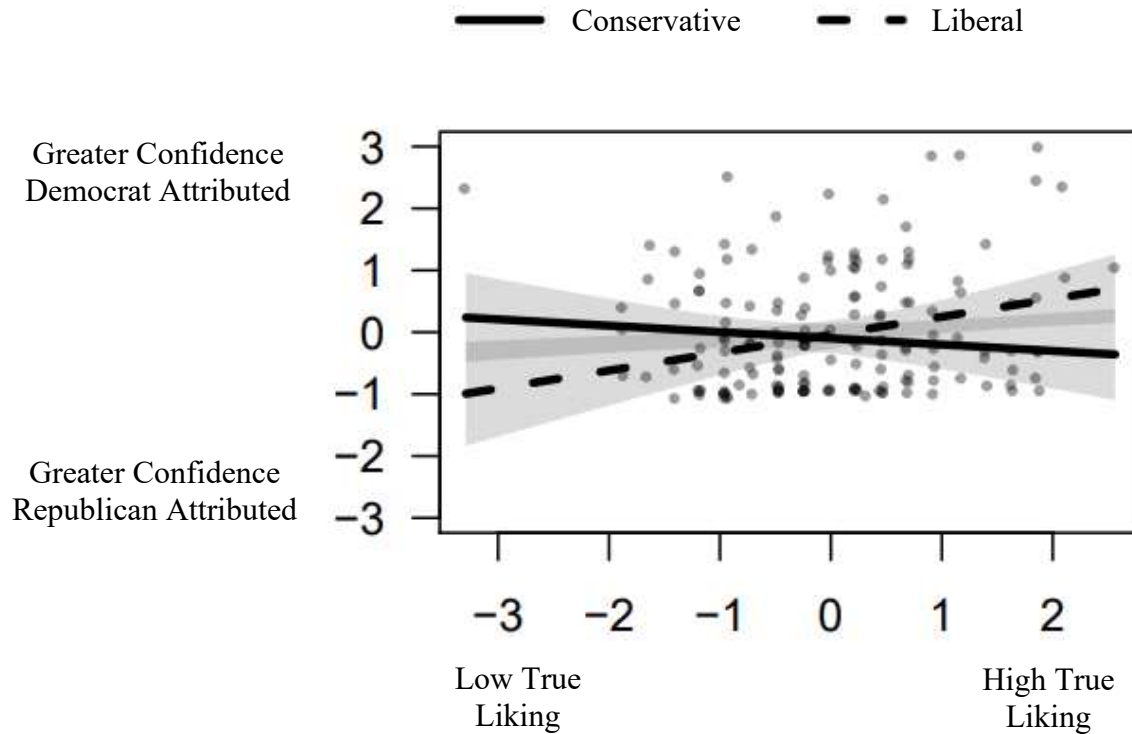
	Estimate	Std. Error	t
Intercept	.069	.083	-.825
True Liking	.094	.084	1.114
Political Ideology	-.029	.085	-.341
True Liking X Political Ideology	-.196	.081	-2.415*

All variables transformed and analyzed as z-scores.

* p < .05

Figure 3

Memory for Policy Attribution - Republican Attributed Policies



Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Democrats, while lower scores indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Republicans. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate higher levels of true liking for policies, while lower scores indicate lower liking.

Hypothesis 2 was tested in a similar fashion to Hypothesis 1, only using attributed policy liking as the outcome variable. Analyses were split between the Republican and Democratic attributed policies. For both, attributed policy liking was regressed on political ideology, true liking, and the interaction between them. For the Democrat attributed policies, the regression model was significant ($R^2 = .586$, $F(3, 154) = 72.53$, $p < .05$). True liking and political ideology were both significant predictors, but their interaction was not. Findings are displayed in Table 3. The plot for this relationship is presented in Figure 4. This plot shows that those low in conservatism (liberals) tended to increase their liking of policies when they were attributed to the

Democrats, while those high in conservatism tended to decrease their liking of policies when they were attributed to the Democrats.

Table 3

Democrat Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology

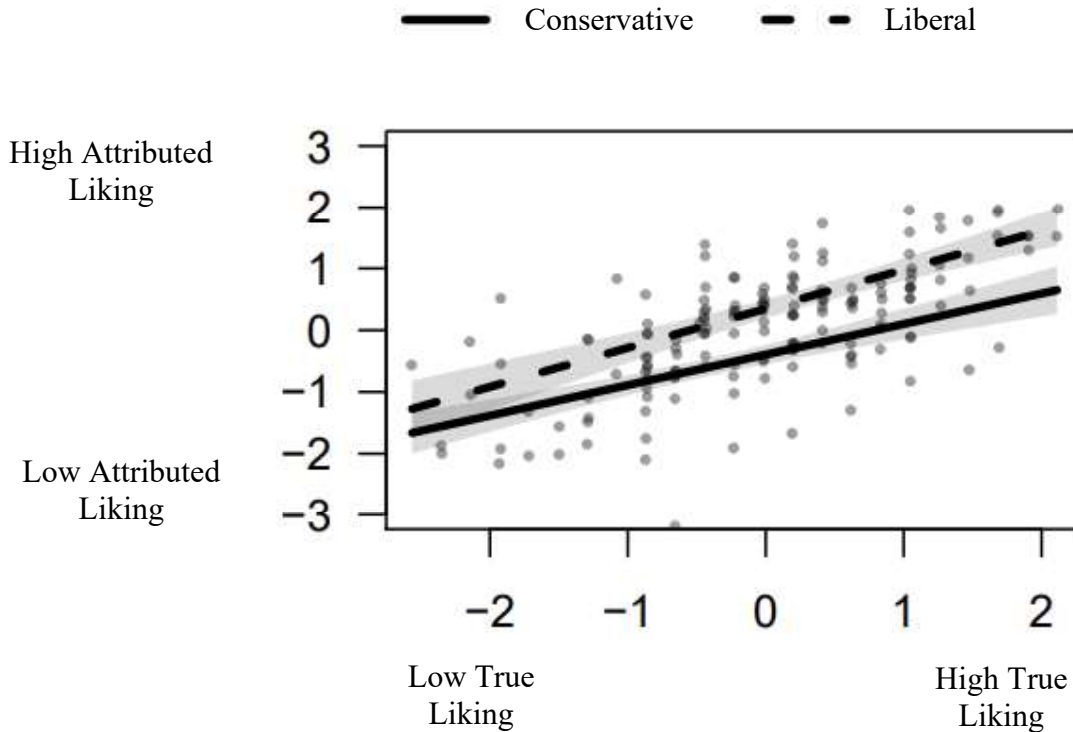
	Estimate	Std. Error	t
Intercept	-.024	.055	-.443
True Liking	.563	.056	10.117*
Political Ideology	-.371	.056	-6.634*
True Liking X Political Ideology	-.069	.050	-1.389

All variables transformed and analyzed as z-scores.

* p < .05

Figure 4

Attributed Policy Liking - Democrat Attributed Policies



Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate greater liking for the Democrat attributed policies; lower scores indicate lower liking. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate increased liking for non-attributed policies; lower scores indicate decreased liking.

A similar effect was observed for the Republican attributed policies as well. The regression model was significant ($R^2 = .335$, $F(3, 153) = 25.64$, $p < .05$). Both true liking and political ideology were found to be significant predictors of attributed policy liking, while the interaction between them was not. The findings are presented in Table 4 below. Figure 5 displays a plot of the relationship. The plot is quite similar to Figure 4. Those high in conservatism tended to increase their liking for policies attributed to Republicans, while those with lower conservatism tended to decrease their liking.

Table 4

Republican Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology

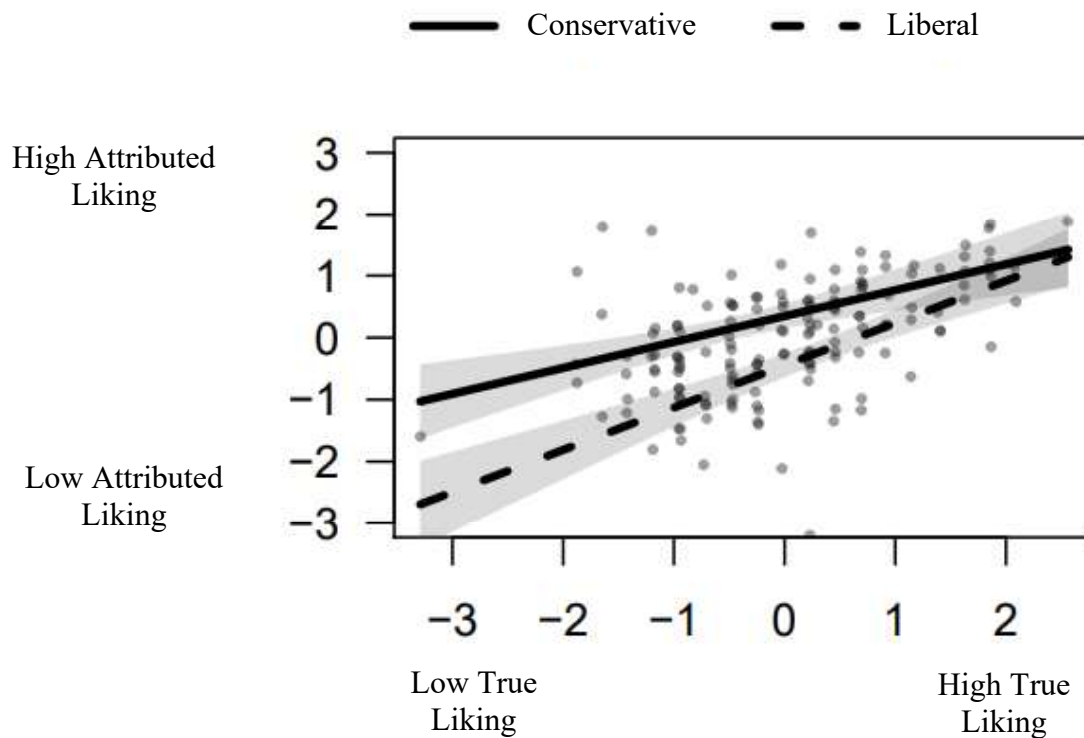
	Estimate	Std. Error	t
Intercept	-.050	.070	-.708
True Liking	.550	.070	7.815*
Political Ideology	.398	.071	5.609*
True Liking X Political Ideology	-.132	.068	-1.944

All variables transformed and analyzed as z-scores.

* p < .05

Figure 5

Attributed Policy Liking - Republican Attributed Policies



Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate greater liking for the Republican attributed policies; lower scores indicate lower liking. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate increased liking for non-attributed policies; lower scores indicate decreased liking.

Discussion

Both hypotheses were supported by the first study. First, participants tended to be more confident that liked policies came from their own party, while being more confident that disliked policies came from the opposing party. This is an important extension of the existing motivated reasoning literature as it highlights a potential connection to existing memory literature.

Although the effect observed is rather small, this tendency to recall liked information as coming from the ingroup, and disliked information as coming from the outgroup may contribute to the political divide observed today. If people tend to recall information they like as having come from their own party and disliked information as coming from the opposing party, it could potentially lead to greater strife and divide. After all, why should I work with the party that never develops policies I like? I also expect this effect would increase if the time between attribution and recall is increased. Recall that the memory task was separated from random attribution by mere minutes, and still an effect was observed. Kleider et al. (2008) support the idea that increasing the separation between random attribution and the memory task will bolster the effect. This was investigated in the second study.

The remaining findings are quite consistent with existing motivated reasoning literature and support the second hypothesis. Participants tended to increase liking for policies when attributed to their own party and increase disliking when they were attributed to the opposing party. A novel finding is that true liking was a predictor of attributed policy liking. This means that if somebody liked (disliked) a policy initially, they still tended to like (dislike) it when it was attributed to a party. However, this liking and disliking is either amplified or diminished depending on attribution. So, if a liberal participant liked a policy initially, and then it was attributed to the Republicans, they may still like it, but to a lesser extent. If that liked policy was

attributed to the Democrats, they would probably like it to an even greater extent. This finding shed more light on the motivated reasoning process and suggests that initial evaluations of information are not completely erased by motivated reasoning. Motivated reasoning effects are none-the-less significant.

Together, both findings seem to lead to a similar conclusion; people tend to refuse to believe the opposing party can have good ideas and assume that their own party only has good ideas. This seems to be consistent with existing social identity theory literature, which suggests people tend to believe their ingroup, and their ingroup's ideas, are inherently positive, while the outgroup and their ideas are inherently negative (Everett et al., 2014; Hewstone et al., 2002). In other words, both variables seem to be tied to social identity to some extent, in which ingroup/outgroup identification influences liking and memory. This opens the door to potential moderating variables related to social identity, such as identity fusion (Swann et al., 2012) and social identity investment (Leach et al., 2008). These potential moderating variables, as well as political sophistication, an established moderating variable in motivated reasoning research (Taber & Lodge, 2006), will be investigated in the second study.

Rationale for Second Study

There were a few limitations of the first study that needed to be addressed. This second preregistered study was designed to address these limitations, while also replicating and extending the findings of the initial project. The first limitation to address is the delay between random policy attribution and the memory task. As mentioned in the discussion, this memory task was mere minutes from the random attribution. In the second study, the random policy attribution was moved to the first part of the project, leaving the memory task in the second part of the experiment. This changed increased the time delay between random attribution of policies

and recall of attribution. I expected this increased delay might amplify the memory effect observed during recall based on Kleider et al. (2008). I believe this change to a longer recall delay also focuses the project on the memory for policy attribution effect, which is the main outcome variable of interest. Moving the random policy attribution measure to the first part of the project also allows for a test of Hypothesis 2, that people will have increased liking for ingroup attributed policies and increased disliking for policies attributed to the opposing party, with a larger sample size. Rather than only being able to test this hypothesis with the participants that returned for the second part of the project, I was now able to analyze all participants who completed the first part of the questionnaire.

The between session delay was also decreased in time. In the first study, participants had 48-72 hours to return to the second part of the project. There was a rather large proportion of participants who did not return for the second part of the first study. To increase the number of participants retained, participants were asked to return for the second part of the project 24-48 hours after completing the first. This seemed to be successful, as retention for the second study was approximately 79.4%.

A final limitation of the first study was that there was no way to determine the actual neutrality of the policies used as stimuli. In fact, some could be construed as not neutral at all with recent political developments (e.g., provide congressional representation for the District of Columbia). To address this issue, I conducted a pilot study involving a much larger policy list (30) to empirically select policies to use as stimuli in the second study.

Pilot Study – Policy Neutrality

The following study was conducted to find, out of 30 total, 12 relatively neutral hypothetical political policies that could be used in the second study. The main goal was to select policies to create 2 blocks of policies that were comparably neutral.

Method

Participants

The sample was comprised of undergraduate students enrolled at Western Kentucky University. All participants received partial course credit for participation. The final sample consisted of 140 participants (101 female; 37 male; 2 non-binary or other). 21 participants were excluded because they either indicated their data should be excluded from the study, or their responses seemed implausible (e.g., indicating they were completely confident all policies were from the Democrats). These exclusions were made before examining the policy neutrality data.

Design

The pilot study was a simple survey. All 30 political policies were presented to all participants, and they indicated which party they believed would support each policy.

Procedure

The questionnaire was entirely online, created using the questionnaire design service Qualtrics. It was administered to participants via the online research participation tool for psychological studies at Western Kentucky University (Study Board).

Prior to the study, 18 new hypothetical political policies were created. These were combined with the 12 political policies from the initial study to create a complete list of 30 hypothetical political policies. The complete list of policies can be found in Appendix B. All were designed with the hope to be somewhat politically neutral, and polarized topics such as

abortion or gun policy were avoided. For the study, participants saw each political policy in a random order, unattributed to either political party. For each, they indicated to what extent they believed the policy to be either Democrat or Republican proposed.

Measures

Policy Neutrality. For each policy, participants indicated the extent they believed the policy was proposed by either the Democrat or Republican party. Participants did this on a 7-point Likert Scale (*1: Completely Confident Democrat... 4: I do not know which party... 7: Completely Confident Republican*).

Results

The mean, median, and standard deviation for each policy was calculated for each policy. Policies were selected so that blocks would be similarly neutral, with overall block means similar to each other. The policies that were selected had a mean and median as close to 4 as possible, as well as the smallest possible standard deviation. Tables 5 and 6 display the characteristics of each block.

Table 5*Policies and Characteristics of Block 1*

	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.
Policy to offer tax breaks to families that adopt children.	3.87	4	1.29
Policy to develop polymer-fiber railroad cars to lower the cost of cross-country transportation.	3.82	4	1.19
Policy to require all-wheel anti-lock brakes on new vehicles.	3.9	4	1.00
Policy to divert United States Agriculture loan programs from natural disaster management to cover crop fundings.	4.48	5	1.10
Policy to create new hybrids of gasoline that improve gas mileage but allow a higher profit margin.	4.14	4	1.32
Policy to allow tech companies access to private information during police investigations to better assist authorities.	4.33	4	1.23
Block Mean	4.09		

Table 6*Policies and Characteristics of Block 2*

	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.
Policy to decrease the amount of funding provided to students through federally funded college loan programs.	4.38	5	1.59
Policy to develop a high-speed train system across the U.S.	4.06	4	1.23
Policy to allow search engines increased access to personal information for advertising purposes.	3.92	4	1.25
Policy to subsidize American steel for infrastructure.	4.73	4	1.06
Policy to abolish daylight savings time nationally.	3.92	4	1.18
Policy to provide liability release to companies that donate food to food pantries.	3.76	4	1.18
Block Mean	4.13		

Discussion

After completing this pilot study, two blocks of hypothetical political policies were created. These policies were viewed as mostly neutral among an undergraduate sample, and the blocks themselves are comparably neutral. These policy blocks were used in the second study.

Study 2

The second study was preregistered and designed to address the described limitations of the first. It was similar to the first, with some methodological improvements to address the noted limitations. Several moderating variables were also investigated: political sophistication, identity fusion, and social identity investment. Each one of these is discussed below.

Moderating Variables

Political Sophistication

The first moderating variable of interest was political sophistication, operationalized as a general knowledge of U.S. politics. Political sophistication is a well-documented moderating variable in motivated reasoning. It has been demonstrated that those higher in political sophistication were more likely to identify President Barack Obama correctly as a Christian, both liberals and conservatives, compared to those low in sophistication (Hartman & Newmark, 2012). Similarly, those high in sophistication have been shown to discount conspiracy theories if the conspiracies were incongruent with their ideological beliefs (Miller et al., 2016). These findings suggest politically sophisticated people are more able to parse through what is true, and what is not, when it comes to political information.

Political sophistication, however, also affects reasoning in ways that may not be expected. Conservatives high in political sophistication were more likely to endorse a conspiracy theory that was congruent with their political ideology compared to conservatives low in

sophistication (Miller et al., 2016). Similarly, Taber and Lodge (2006) found those high in political sophistication had increased tendencies to rate belief-confirming arguments as stronger than belief-challenging arguments. They also found high sophisticates tended to seek out arguments supporting their existing beliefs but spent more time processing belief-challenging arguments – consistent with a desire to counterargue. These findings suggest those high in sophistication do not necessarily use their knowledge to make accurate conclusions. Rather, they may use it to make conclusions that are consistent with their existing beliefs.

The second study used an adapted version of political sophistication based on the work of Miller et al. (2016). Miller and colleagues developed an 11-item quiz on general political knowledge, which was updated for the present-day political landscape to be used in this project. Greater performance on the quiz indicated greater political sophistication. I hypothesized that as political sophistication increased, participants would be more likely to remember liked policies as coming from their own party, and disliked policies as coming from the opposing party, based on the notion that those high in political sophistication would be able to justify their memory task assertions more fluently.

Partisan Identity Fusion

Another variable of interest was identity fusion. Identity fusion indicates the extent a person's personal identity and social identity have become merged. When high fusion occurs, an individual begins seeing their group, and its other members (even those they have not met), as an extension of themselves. They still, however, retain personal agency, meaning their actions are driven by their own desires, not necessarily the desires of the group (Swann et al., 2012). Highly fused individuals are thus more likely to act in ways to protect the group or assist the group and its members, almost as if they were protecting themselves (Swann & Buhrmester, 2015; Swann

et al., 2012). Existing identity fusion research has shown that those high in fusion are more likely to participate in monetary giving to ingroup members (Purzycki & Lang, 2019), including political ingroup members (Misch et al., 2018). Other research has shown more extreme behavior from those high in identity fusion. In a review of literature, Swann and Buhrmester (2015) found those high in fusion were more likely to endorse dying for their group. Another review found those high-fused people were more likely to overlook ethical transgressions of their ingroup and endorse violence towards outgroups perceived as dangerous (Henríquez et al., 2020).

A review of relevant research has not revealed a connection between identity fusion and motivated reasoning. However, the findings from my first study are possibly related to social identity to some extent, which suggests the possible relevance of identity fusion. It follows from the construct of identity fusion that those high in fusion may be more susceptible to motivated reasoning, as they have a deeper connection with their group and may be more motivated to come to conclusions that support the group and/or their existing political beliefs.

In the second study, I utilized a 7-item identity fusion scale developed by Gómez et al. (2011), with slight alterations to transform it into a political identity fusion scale. I hypothesized high identity fusion scores (relative to lower scores) would be associated with increased confidence that a liked policy came from the ingroup party, and increased confidence that a disliked policy came from the outgroup.

Social Identity Investment

A final variable of interest was social identity investment. I have already posed the idea that the findings from my first study may be related to social identity in some capacity. Social identity, however, is quite a broad concept. Leach et al. (2008) argued that social identity could be divided into two components, group self-definition and self-investment, which themselves

include sub-components. Self-definition includes centrality, self-stereotyping, and ingroup homogeneity. Centrality refers to the extent that a group is a central aspect of a person's self-concept. Self-stereotyping refers to the extent a person identifies themselves as similar to other ingroup members. Ingroup homogeneity refers to the extent a person believes all members in a group share common traits (Leach et al., 2008). Self-investment includes items measuring solidarity and satisfaction. Solidarity refers to the commitment and psychological bond an individual has with the group. Satisfaction refers to how happy a person is with their group (Leach et al., 2008).

Research has provided evidence that ingroup self-definition and self-investment can affect behavior in unique ways. For example, one article has shown that people tend to share more ingroup norms regarding climate change when they report higher self-investment with the group, but the construct of self-definition was not found to be related to changes in climate change beliefs (Masson & Fritsche, 2014). Similarly, another project found that those with high ingroup self-investment were more likely to perceive news articles as biased against their group, while self-definition was not related (Hartmann & Tanis, 2013).

These results suggest that ingroup self-investment may, in particular, lead a person to be more supportive of the ingroup and its norms. It might be that a person who is invested in their ingroup may be more motivated to believe the ingroup has good ideas. After all, why would they be invested in a group that develops negative ideas? Thus, I expected ingroup self-investment, but not ingroup self-definition, would act as a moderating variable to memory for policy attribution. Specifically, I expected those higher in self-investment will be more confident policies they liked came from their own party, and more confident disliked policies came from the outgroup party. Although the hypothesis only pertains to self-investment, the entire scale

developed by Leach et al. (2008) was included in the questionnaire for potential exploratory analysis in the future.

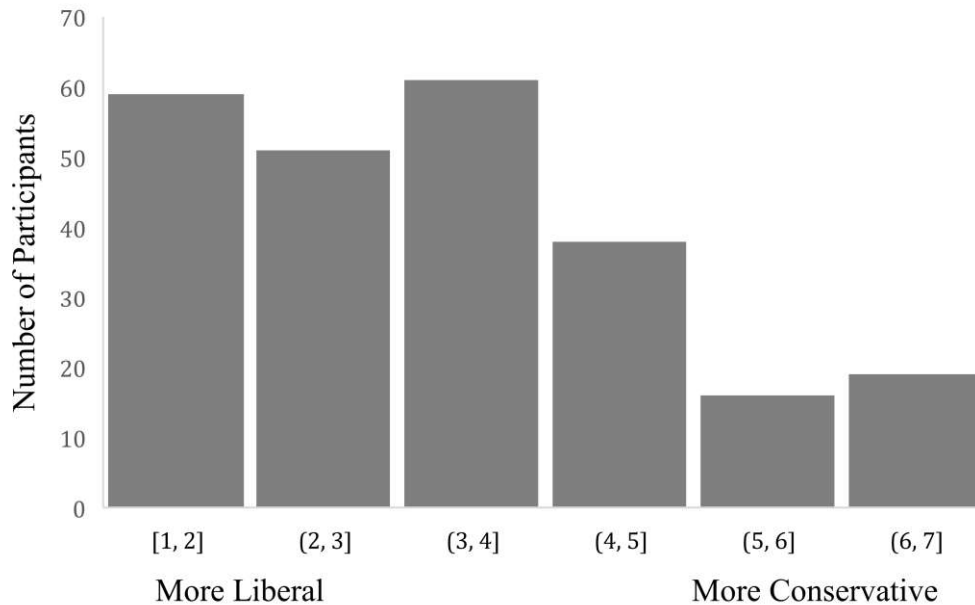
Method

Participants

The sample was comprised of undergraduate students enrolled at Western Kentucky University. All participants received partial course credit for participation. The final sample consisted of 272 participants (212 female, 56 male, 2 non-binary or other) who completed the first part of the study. The mean age of the sample was approximately $M = 19.9$ years old ($SD = 2.98$). This sample was majority liberal. The distribution of political ideology for the sample is presented in figure 6. Of these 272 participants, 216 (79.4%) returned for the second part of the project. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were told that it was vital to obtain data from individuals paying attention to the project, and they were asked if their data should be included. Fifty-six participants were excluded because they either indicated their data should be excluded from the study, or their responses seemed implausible (e.g., indicating they were completely confident all policies were from the Democrats). This resulted in a final sample of 216 total participants, 151 of which returned for the second part of the study.

Figure 6

Distribution of Political Ideology in Study 2



Design

The second study was again a two-part, within-subjects design. There were 3 predictor variables, two of which were measured (true liking of political policies and political ideology) and one that was manipulated (random attribution of policies to the Democrat or Republican party). For this manipulated variable, randomization was counterbalanced. Policies were randomly assigned to two blocks prior to the study (6 policies to each block). Within the study, one policy block was randomly assigned to one of the parties, and the other to the other party, separately for each participant. There were two outcome variables, attributed policy liking and memory for policy attribution. There were also 3 moderator variables, all of which were measured: political sophistication, identity fusion, and social identity investment.

Procedure

To administer the study, I designed a questionnaire using the online questionnaire design service Qualtrics. This questionnaire was administered to the participants via Study Board, the online research participation tool for psychological studies at Western Kentucky University. The researchers did not have any personal contact with participants, and the entire procedure was carried out online.

The questionnaire had two parts. In part one, participants were presented with 12 hypothetical political policies. These were the policies developed from the policy neutrality pilot study. One of the policies from the first block of policies did not transfer correctly into Qualtrics (policy to create new hybrids of gasoline that improve gas mileage but allow a higher profit margin). This unfortunately made the data involving this policy unusable, and it was removed prior to analysis. The new mean for policy block 1 was only slightly affected (mean went from 4.09 to 4.08). This suggests it was still comparable to block 2. Thus, block 1 was used with one less policy than block 2. The full list of the political policies can be found in Appendix C.

Participants indicated their liking for each of these policies, which were unattributed at the time. As in study 1, this liking measure will be referred to as true liking. They then completed a distractor task. Following the distractor task, participants saw the policies again. Policies were presented in the two predetermined blocks, in counterbalanced order, with one block randomly attributed to the Republican party, and the other block attributed to the Democrat party as described in the design. Respondents indicated their liking of the attributed policies. This liking measure is referred to as attributed policy liking. Participants then responded to items that indicated their political ideology and political identity fusion.

Twenty-four to forty-eight hours later, participants returned for the second part of the questionnaire. Participants saw all 11 policies again in the context of memory task. For each policy, participants indicated how confident they were that either party had supposedly proposed the policy. This memory measure served as the memory for policy attribution variable. Next, participants indicated their level of social identity investment and identification. Finally, participants self-reported their general knowledge of politics and then took an 11-item quiz about general political topics (political sophistication).

Measures

True Liking. True liking of policies was a predictor variable. All 11 political policies were presented to participants in part one of the study, unattributed to either party at the time. Participants indicated their liking of each policy by responding to a 7-point Likert scale (1: *Extremely Oppose...7: Extremely Support*). A mean score was calculated for both blocks of policies. This provided a mean true liking score for policies that would, in the next part of the study, be attributed to Republicans and another for policies that would be attributed to Democrats.

Political Ideology. Political ideology was the second predictor variable. Two self-report measures were utilized to capture this. First, participants responded to a 7-point Likert political ideology scale (1: *Very Liberal... 7: Very Conservative*). They then responded to a second 7-point Likert scale to report the extent to which they identified as a Republican or Democrat (1: *Democrat... 7: Republican*). Political ideology was calculated by aggregating these two scales together. Thus, higher scores on this scale indicated a higher level of conservatism (conservatives), while a lower score indicated a lower level of conservatism (liberals).

Memory for Policy Attribution. The main outcome variable of interest was memory for policy attribution. For this memory task, all political policies were presented again, unattributed. On a 7-point Likert scale, participants recalled which political party each policy was attributed to, and how confident they were in their assertion (*1: Completely Confident Republican... 7: Completely Confident Democrat*). Mean scores were calculated for both blocks of policies. Thus, higher scores indicate more confidence the policies in the block were attributed to the Democrats, and lower scores indicate more confidence the policies in the block were attributed to the Republicans. This provided a mean memory for policy attribution score for policies that were attributed to Republicans, and another for policies that were attributed to Democrats.

Attributed Policy Liking. Attributed policy liking was a secondary outcome variable of interest. This was measured in the same fashion as the true liking score, but this time with knowledge of which party each policy had been randomly attributed to. Specifically, on a 7-point Likert scale, participants indicated how much they liked the policies now the policies were attributed to either the Democrats or Republicans (*1: Extremely Support... 7: Extremely Oppose*). Mean scores were calculated for both blocks of policies and were reverse scored so that higher values indicated greater support. This provided a mean attributed policy liking score for policies that were attributed to Republicans, and another for policies that were attributed to Democrats.

Political Sophistication. An adapted 11-item quiz of general political knowledge used in existing political sophistication research (Miller et al., 2016) was used to measure political sophistication. This short quiz included items such as “who is the current speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives” and “how long is the term of office for a U.S. Senator.” Essentially, this quiz measures general knowledge of politics, which is what political sophistication has been operationalized as. Each item was multiple choice and included a response in which a participant

could indicate they did not know the answer. The sum of the correct answers quiz was calculated and used as the political sophistication score. Possible scores ranged from 0 to 11, with higher scores indicating greater political sophistication (general knowledge), while lower scores indicated lower political sophistication.

Identity Fusion. Identity fusion was measured using the 7-item identity fusion scale developed by Gómez et al. (2011), adapted to measure political identity fusion. The items are various statements, and participants respond by indicating the extent they agree with each statement on a 7-point Likert Scale (*1: Strongly Disagree... 7: Strongly Agree*). Sample items include “I am one with my party” and “I feel immersed in my party.” The mean of the scale is taken as the final identity fusion score. The scale has been validated by Gómez et al. (2011) and has strong test-retest and split-half reliability. They also showed that all items loaded onto a single factor, and they were able to differentiate identity fusion from ingroup identification.

Social Identity Investment. Social identity investment was measured using the 14-item social identity scale developed by Leach et al. (2008). This scale of social identity differentiates social identity definition and social identity investment. 10 items measure investment and the other 4 measure definition. I expected a moderating effect for social identity investment alone but included the entire scale to explore social identity definition in the future. Participants indicated their level of agreement with various statements (*1: Strongly Disagree... 7: Strongly Agree*). The mean for the investment sub-scale was calculated. An example of an investment item is “I am glad to be in my political party.”

Results

Prior to testing the hypotheses, I computed the means and standard deviations for the true liking, attributed policy liking, and memory for policy attribution variables. The liking for

policies attributed to the Democrats and Republicans were quite comparable. The mean true liking for policies that would be attributed to the Democrats was $M = 4.16$ ($SD = .75$), and for to-be Republican attributed policies the mean was $M = 4.11$ ($SD = .77$). The attributed policy liking for policies were also quite similar; for Democrat attributed policies, $M = 4.20$ ($SD = .86$) and for Republican attributed policies, $M = 4.15$ ($SD = .86$). Memory for policy attribution showed that people were tended to be accurate in their memories of which party the policies were attributed to, but not very confident in their memories. The mean for policies attributed to the Democrats was $M = 4.65$ ($SD = .87$), while for Republican attributed policies $M = 3.36$ ($SD = 1.01$). This suggests that participants still tended to be correct in memories, but compared to the first study, they were less confident in their memories.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test all hypotheses. Again, outcomes were analyzed separately for the Republican and Democrat attributed policies. All variables were transformed into z-scores prior to analysis, and all relevant figures display the variables as z-scores. In all figures, political ideology is represented as scores +1 standard deviation or greater (conservatives) or -1 standard deviation or lower (liberals) on the political ideology scale. This was done to simplify the figures and allow the reader to view the figures with clear political party separations. In the regression models however, it was still treated as a continuous variable.

First, I will discuss the findings for the main outcome of interest, memory for policy attribution. Memory for policy attribution was regressed on political ideology, true liking, and their interaction. For the Democrat attributed policies, the regression model was significant ($R^2 = .061$, $F(3, 148) = 4.049$, $p < .05$). Neither true liking nor political ideology were significant predictors of the variance observed in memory for policy attribution, but their interaction was.

The results are displayed in Table 7. Figure 7 displays the observed interaction, showing that participants tended to remember policies they initially liked as coming from their preferred party.

Table 7

Memory for Policy Attribution Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology - Democrat

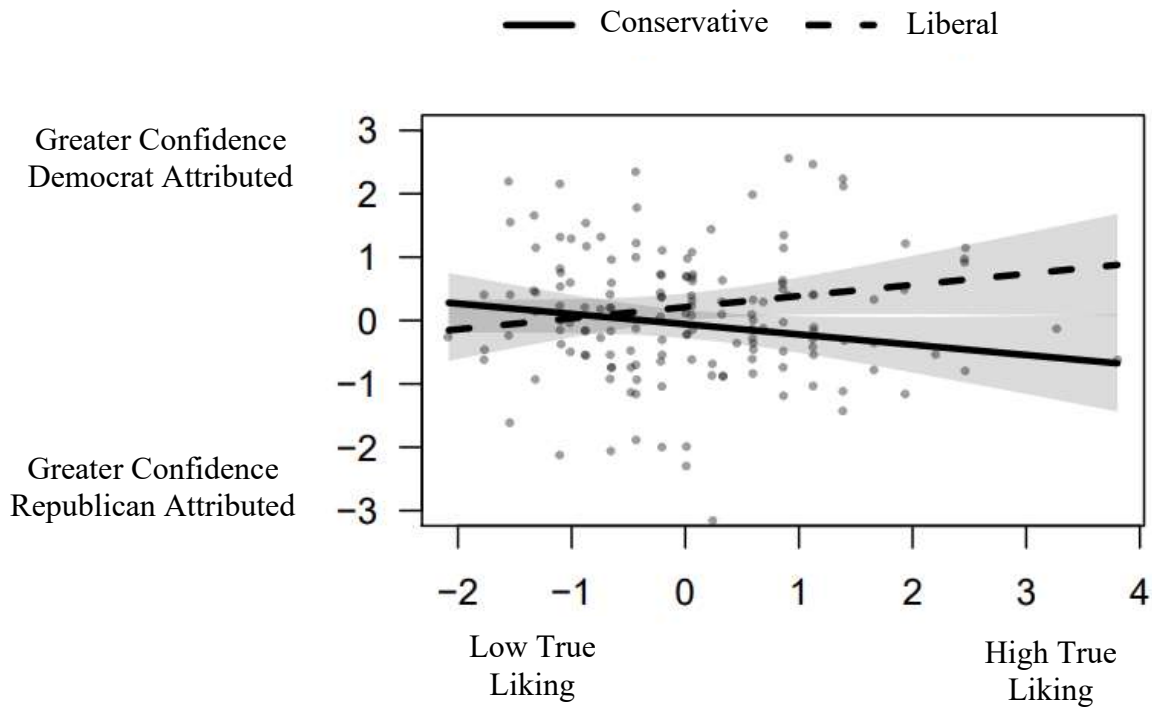
	Estimate	Std. Error	t
Intercept	.076	.081	.947
True Liking	.007	.075	.087
Political Ideology	-.134	.076	-1.760
True Liking X Political Ideology	-.169	.068	-2.480*

All variables transformed and analyzed as z-scores.

* p < .05

Figure 7

Memory for Policy Attribution - Democrat Attributed Policies

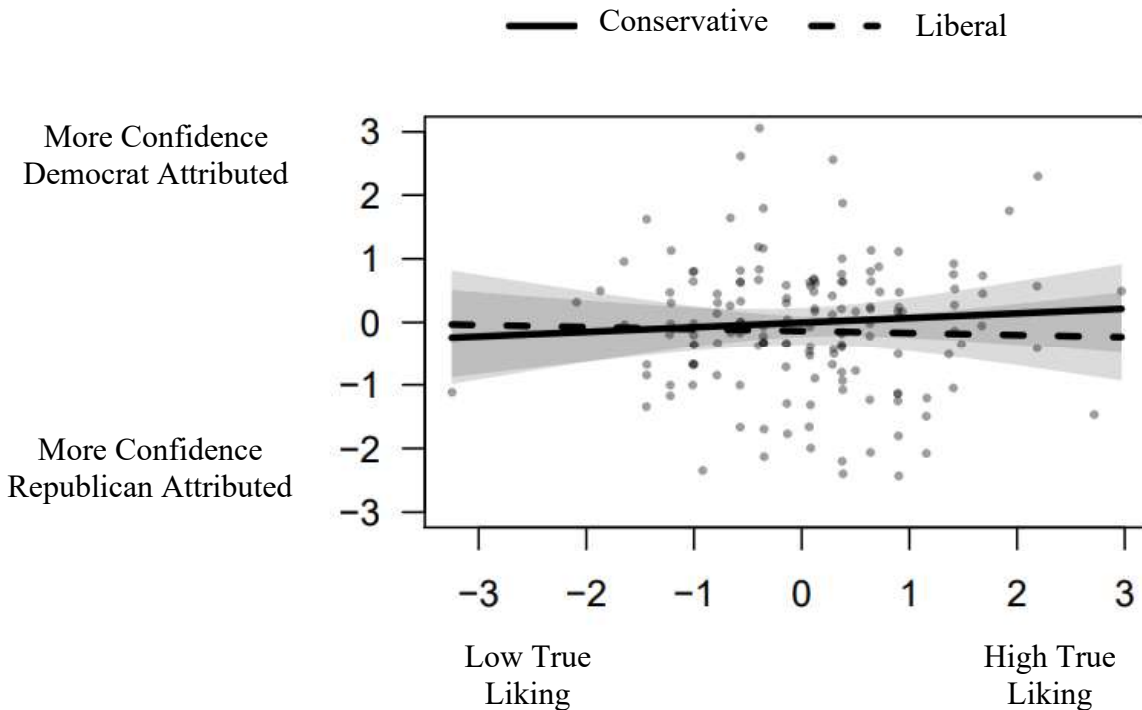


Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Democrats, while lower scores indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Republicans. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate higher levels of true liking for policies, while lower scores indicate lower liking.

As for the Republican attributed policies, findings were null. The regression model was nonsignificant ($R^2 = .009$, $F(3, 148) = .442$, $p = .723$). No variables in the model were significant predictors. The closest was ideology, which had a $p = .405$. A plot of the data is presented in Figure 8, which shows conservatives and liberals were quite similar in their memory scores.

Figure 8

Memory for Policy Attribution - Republican Attributed Policies



Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Democrats, while lower scores indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Republicans. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate higher levels of true liking for policies, while lower scores indicate lower liking.

Next, I will discuss the findings for Hypothesis 2. This hypothesis was tested in a similar fashion, except the outcome variable was changed to attributed policy liking. Attributed policy liking was regressed on political ideology, true liking, and their interaction. For the Democrat attributed policies, the regression model was significant ($R^2 = .427$, $F(3, 212) = 52.69$, $p < .05$). True liking and political ideology were both significant predictors, but their interaction was not. Findings are displayed in Table 8, and the relationship is plotted in Figure 9. This plot shows that

those low in conservatism tend to have higher attributed policy liking scores than those high in conservatism. It also shows that true liking is a strong predictor of attributed policy liking.

Table 8

Democrat Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology

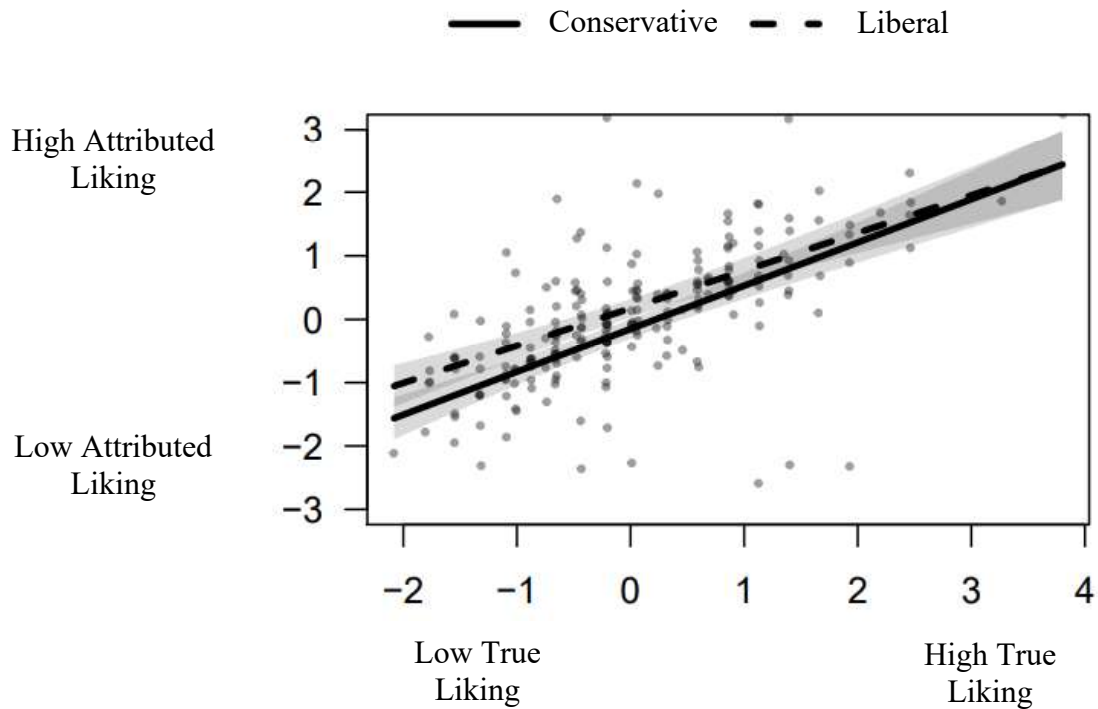
	Estimate	Std. Error	t
Intercept	-.013	.053	.248
True Liking	.635	.052	12.175*
Political Ideology	-.163	.053	-3.060*
True Liking X Political Ideology	.044	.049	.905

All variables transformed and analyzed as z-scores.

* p < .05

Figure 9

Attributed Policy Liking – Democrat Attributed Policies



Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate greater liking for the Democrat attributed policies; lower scores indicate lower liking. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate increased liking for non-attributed policies; lower scores indicate decreased liking.

A similar effect was observed for the Republican attributed policies. The regression model was significant ($R^2 = .446$, $F(3, 212) = 56.97$, $p < .05$). Both true liking and political ideology were significant predictors of attributed policy liking, while the interaction between them was not significant. The findings are presented in Table 9, and Figure 10 displays a plot of the effects. This plot shows that those high in conservatism tended to increase liking for the Republican attributed policies compared to liberal counterparts. Still, true liking was a strong significant predictor of attributed policy liking too.

Table 9

Republican Attributed Policy Liking Regressed on True Liking and Political Ideology

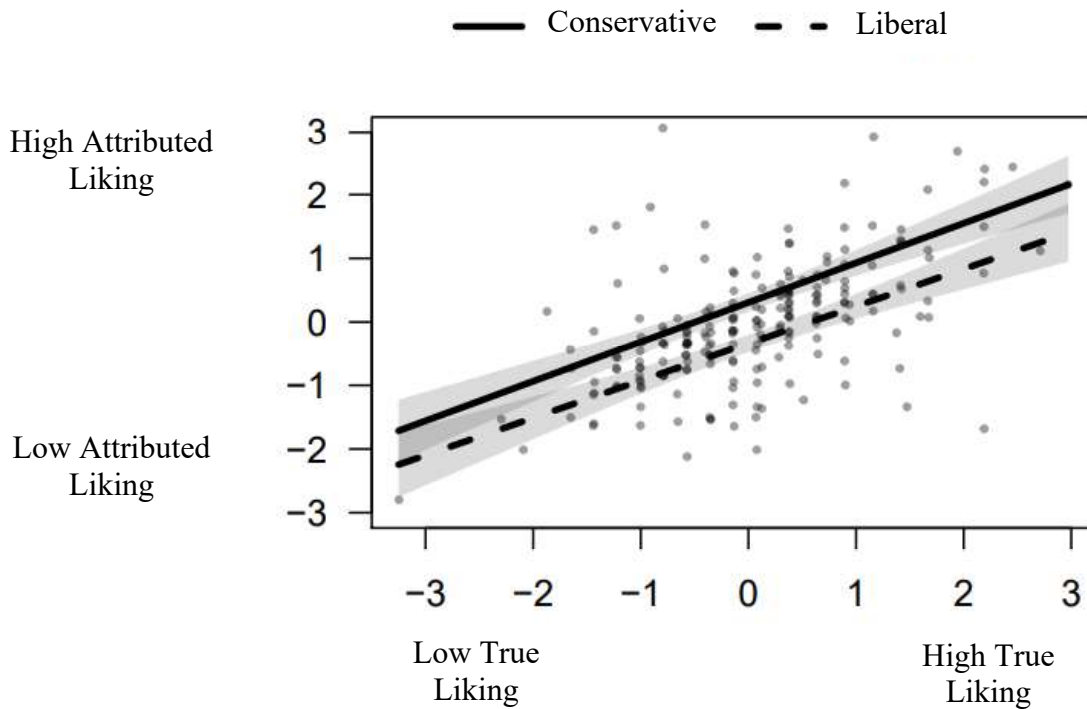
	Estimate	Std. Error	t
Intercept	-.016	.051	-.316
True Liking	.604	.052	11.547*
Political Ideology	.323	.051	6.378*
True Liking X Political Ideology	.017	.052	.342

All variables transformed and analyzed as z-scores.

* $p < .05$

Figure 10

Attributed Policy Liking – Republican Attributed Policies



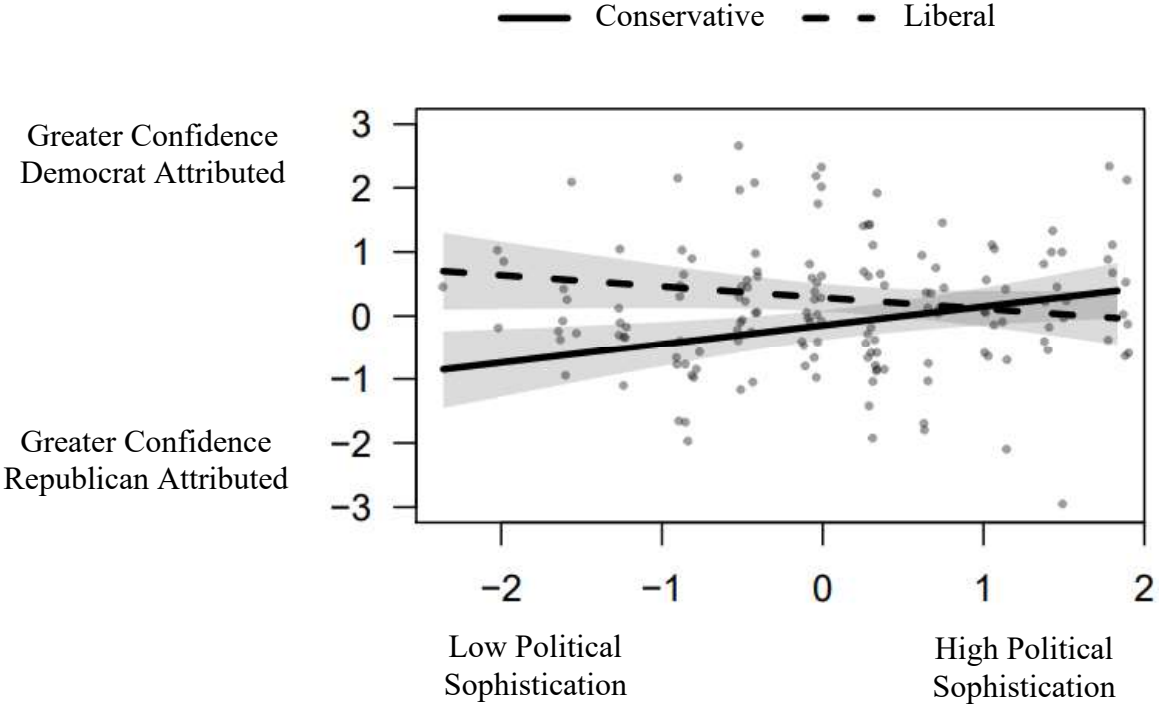
Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate greater liking for the Republican attributed policies; lower scores indicate lower liking. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate increased liking for non-attributed policies; lower scores indicate decreased liking.

For the moderation hypotheses, the general model for all analyses was memory for policy attribution regressed on true liking, ideology, the moderator variable, and all higher-order interactions between the variables. All variables, including the moderated variables, were transformed into z-scores prior to analysis. Identity fusion and social identity investment failed to produce significant moderation effects. Models failed to reach significance, and no main effects or interactions were detected for either identity fusion or social identity investment. Political sophistication did, however, produce some significant results.

When investigating sophistication, the regression model for the Democrat attributed policies was significant ($R^2 = .129$, $F(7, 143) = 3.021$, $p < .05$). In this model, political ideology ($\beta = -.217$, $p < .05$) and the interaction between political ideology and political sophistication ($\beta = .236$, $p < .05$) achieved significance. The observed interaction is plotted in Figure 11. This plot shows that those low in sophistication tend to remember policies as coming from their own party. When people were high in sophistication, this observed effect seemed to disappear.

Figure 11

Political Sophistication Moderation – Democrat Attributed Policies

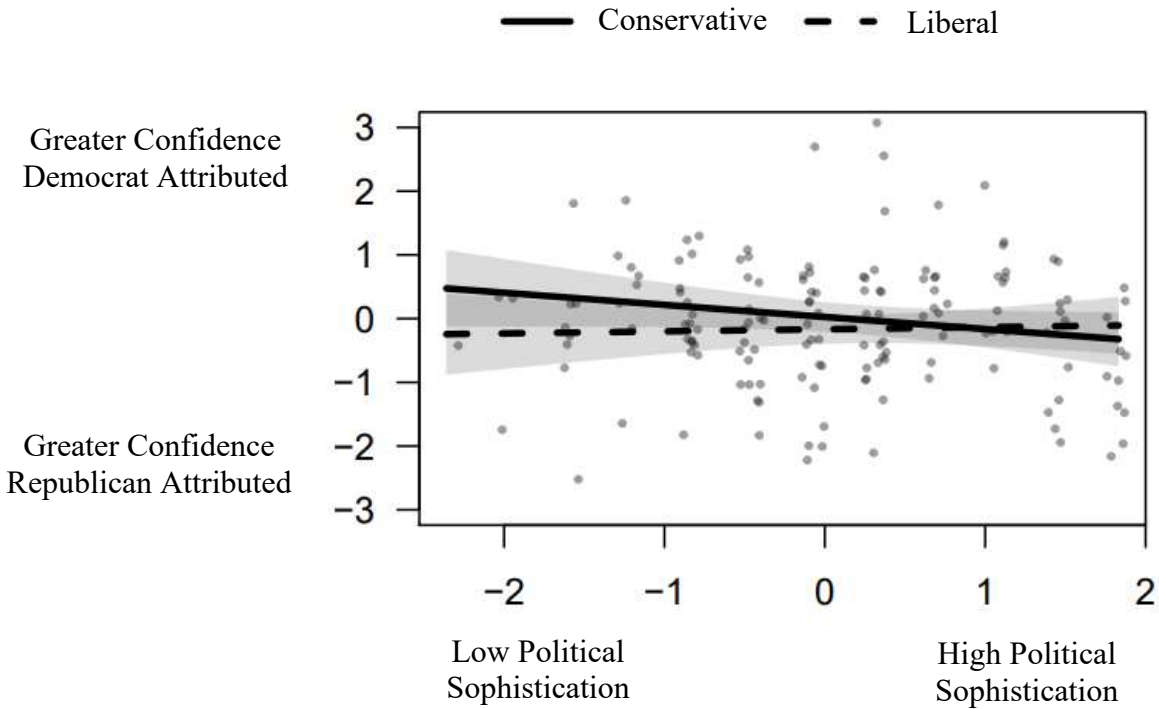


Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Democrats, while lower scores indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Republicans. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate higher levels of political sophistication, while lower scores indicate lower political sophistication.

The moderation of sophistication did not replicate for the policies that were attributed to the Republican party. The regression model was non-significant ($R^2 = .062$, $F(7, 143) = 3.021$, $p = .23$). In Figure 12, the interaction between ideology and political sophistication is plotted, showing the lack of replication compared to the policies that were attributed to the Democrats.

Figure 12

Political Sophistication Moderation – Republican Attributed Policies



Note. All variables are displayed as z-score transformations. Political ideology ratings are 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on the political ideology measure (Conservative = +1SD; Liberal = -1SD). Higher scores on the y-axis indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Democrats, while lower scores indicate more confidence the policy was attributed to the Republicans. Higher scores on the x-axis indicate higher levels of political sophistication, while lower scores indicate lower political sophistication.

Discussion

The memory for policy attribution partially replicated in this second study, but only for the policies that were attributed to the Democrats. The expected interaction between ideology and time attitudes was observed, supporting the first hypothesis that people would tend to remember policies they liked as being attributed to the ingroup, and policies they disliked as being attributed to the outgroup. Further investigation showed that this effect appeared to be especially prominent for liked policies. Disliked policies, in contrast, did not produce the same

biased memory effect where disliked policies are remembered as being attributed to the opposing group. As for the Republican attributed policies, no significant effects were observed. Thus, only the results produced from the Democrat attributed policies supported the first hypothesis.

The results for the second hypothesis, which was that participants would increase their liking for policies attributed to their own party and decrease their liking for policies attributed to the opposing party, replicated quite well, and show support for Hypothesis 2. When the policies were attributed to the Democrats, liberal participants tended to like the policies more than conservatives. When policies were attributed to the Republicans, the conservatives tended to like the policies more than liberals. Still, it is important to remember that true liking was still a significant predictor of attributed policy liking. This means that a person's initial attitudes toward the policies predicted their attitudes toward the policies when they were attributed. For example, if a liberal initially liked a policy, and then the policy was attributed to the Republicans, they would probably still like the policy, but to a lesser extent. If the policy was attributed to the Democrats, they would likely increase their liking of the policy.

I also hypothesized that political sophistication would moderate the memory effect observed. Specifically, I expected those high in sophistication, compared to those low in sophistication, would tend to be more inclined to remember policies they liked as being attributed to their own party and policies they disliked as being attributed to the opposing party. The moderation analysis for policies that were attributed to the Democrats did produce significant results, however, in an unexpected direction. Those results suggested that those high in sophistication were less likely to remember policies in ways consistent with their liking of the policies than those low in sophistication. It appears that those high in sophistication had less biased memories of policy attribution, contrary to my expectation.

Although this finding for sophistication was not hypothesized, it is consistent with findings suggesting that those high in sophistication are more accurate in political decision making (Hartman & Newmark, 2012; Miller et al., 2016). This seems to have been the case in this project, as those that are low in sophistication showed biases in their memory. It would be interesting to see if those in sophistication are more accurate, or rather just more likely to indicate less confidence in assessments. It could be the case that because the policies were not controversial or stereotypically associated with a particular party, participants could not rely on their existing political knowledge to assist their memory. Those high in sophistication might have recognized this, and simply indicated they could not remember where the policy was attributed (or at least that they were not very confident in their assertion). Those low in sophistication, however, may have relied more on their liking in the memory task, leading to the biased memory effect observed. Conclusions are difficult to make because the finding did not replicate in policies attributed to the Republicans. Future research could investigate if this finding replicates, and further parse what the cause of it is.

The other hypothesized moderation effects for identity fusion and social group were not observed. It could be that the undergraduate sample used in this study does not provide the best ability to test these moderating variables. Identity fusion and social group investment indicate stronger connections and commitments to an ingroup. Undergraduate students may not be particularly invested or fused to a group like a political party. Young undergraduates, such as first years and sophomores, are likely only just beginning to be invested in politics. Not only that, but college could also be a time of shifting political attitudes as people are presented with new ideas. These factors may indicate that they do not have a strong connection to a political

party. Perhaps a similar study conducted with a sample more solidified in their political support and attitudes would produce expected results.

General Discussion

Collectively, the two studies offer partial support for Hypothesis 1, that people tend to remember liked political policies as coming from the ingroup. Rather consistently, people believed the hypothetical policies they liked were attributed to their own party. The first study also showed that people tended to believe disliked policies were attributed to the opposing group, but this did not replicate well in the second study. This finding may highlight a contributing factor to political tensions in the U.S. and globally. If people tend to remember the policies they like as coming from their ingroup party, it could potentially lead to greater liking for their own party and greater disliking for the opposing party. This could be even stronger if people also tend to remember disliked policies as being attributed to the opposing party. In this case, a person would come to believe that most liked policies were from their own party and most disliked policies were from the opposing party. If this was the case, why would they want their party to work with the opposing party, or even listen to the opposing party's opinions? Everything "they" – the opposing party – come up with is a bad idea!

Although there is evidence that supports the first hypothesis, the results for the second study did not perfectly replicate the results of the first study. In the second study, only when they were attributed to Democrats were liked policies remembered as being attributed to the participant's own party. Why did the results for the memory effect only partially replicate in this second study? There are methodological changes to the second study that were implemented as improvements but could have potentially affected results in an unforeseen way. However, there is also a larger issue to consider– when were the data collected?

Data for the first study were collected in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. This means that the 2020 U.S. presidential election, a highly politically polarizing event, took place during data collection. This election could have potentially affected the results of the study, explaining why there was only partial replication for the second study. There is recent evidence that suggests elections do produce changes in individuals. For instance, one study found that for the 2016 U.S. presidential election, identity fusion with a person's political party gradually increased the closer the election came. After the election, fusion began to weaken (Misch et al., 2016). Similarly, Edelson et al. (2017) found that all individuals were more likely to believe election fraud conspiracy theories just preceding the 2012 presidential election. After the election, only those whose party had lost continued their increased belief in election fraud conspiracies.

Perhaps the memory effect observed in my two studies worked in a similar fashion. Just before and after the highly contested 2020 election, people remembered liked policies as having come from their own party *and* disliked policies as having come from the opposing party. Tensions between parties were running (perhaps historically) high. Maybe this motivated individuals to remember policies in ways that supported their ingroup (liked policies came from the ingroup) and oppose their outgroup (disliked policies came from the outgroup). In the data used for the second study, which was collected in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, political tensions likely decreased. People could have still been motivated to support their own party, which is why liked policies were still remembered as having been attributed to the ingroup. However, the motivation to oppose the other party could have decreased significantly, which is why in the second study participants did not appear to remember disliked policies as having been attributed to the opposing party. Perhaps in some other fashion, this could explain why the memory effect was only observed in policies attributed to the Democrats, and not for the policies attributed to

the Republicans, in the second study. A study designed specifically to determine if this potential cause has any merit could be quite interesting.

The two studies also strongly suggest that people tend to like policies more when they are attributed to their own group and like them less when they are attributed to the opposing group. When attributed to the Republicans, conservatives tended to like policies more than liberals. The opposite was true when policies were attributed to the Democrats. This is largely consistent with existing research that found similar increases in liking for neutral information attributed to the ingroup (Bolsen et al., 2014; Maoz et al., 2002). Still, it was somewhat surprising how simple the manipulation was that produced the effect. Recall that in these studies, the manipulation was simply attributing the policies to the Democrats or Republicans; the policy itself was not altered in any other way. This simple manipulation produced these consistent changes in liking for both studies. If simply telling a person a random policy came from their own party increases support for that policy, imagine what might happen if that policy was openly endorsed by leaders in their preferred party. Not only that, but those leaders may actively try to convince their base the policy is positive. Liking could potentially increase greatly, regardless of a person's true feeling toward the policy.

Overall, I believe these studies provide insights into political behavior and extend existing knowledge of motivated reasoning. Of course, there were limitations of the project that could be improved upon. First, the sample utilized was comprised of undergraduate students, raising questions as to the generalizability of the results in a typical sample. Future research might attempt to replicate these findings in samples that are more representative of the general population. Although my sample is limiting, existing literature suggests these findings could be reproducible in other samples. It has been found that older adults tend to rely on schemas in

memory tasks more than younger adults (Mather & Johnson, 2003). As discussed in the literature review, the observed memory effect in these studies may be connected to schematic memory. If this is truly the case, the memory effect may be even stronger in an older, more representative sample. Furthermore, it might be that college students are not as politically involved as the general population. Perhaps greater political interest and involvement would bolster the effect as well.

Another related limitation is that the samples is also not very representative of the political landscape. The samples from both studies leaned quite heavily liberal. This was expected in this college student sample, but still limits my ability to make conclusions. A sample with more political ideology variety could provide interesting findings. Potentially, new findings regarding conservatives could be found if they had more representation. This limitation could also somehow contribute to the lack of replication in the memory effect in the second study. I hope future studies will be able to capture a more even distributed sample and investigate potential changes.

A final limitation is that the sample for the second study was not as large as hoped for. The sample size goal was 250-300 participants with usable data to test for the memory effect. Unfortunately, time constraints restricted the sample size, resulting in a final sample of 151 participants to test the memory effect (essentially the same size as the final sample of study 1, which had 154 participants). Still, more participants (216) were available to test the attributed policy liking effect, a significant improvement from study 1. I hope that future studies of these effects can obtain larger samples.

Conclusion

Despite these limitations, I believe these studies provide useful insights in at least 3 ways. First, it highlights potential contributors to the political divide observed in the current day. Both the memory for policy attribution and attributed policy liking effects have the potential to be contributing forces in political division. Consistently remembering policy attribution and liking policies in ways that are consistent with one's ideology could fortify their feelings toward their own party and contribute to a growth of disliking for the opposing party.

Second, it replicates and furthers existing knowledge of motivated reasoning. Not only does it replicate existing motivated reasoning findings, but it also highlights the importance of a person's initial attitudes of policies. Controlling for a person's true attitudes seems like it could be incredibly important and failing to do so could change interpretation of results. In this study, I was able to see that initial attitudes are still predictors. Liked policies are still liked, and disliked policies are still disliked, but the extent that they are liked or disliked is altered depending on the party the policy was attributed to. Other literature in motivated reasoning seems to fail to consider this.

Third, it extends motivated reasoning literature into new, exciting avenues. To the best of my knowledge, motivated reasoning research in the context of a memory study has not been conducted. The observed memory effect now highlights some interesting potential connections between motivated reasoning and existing memory research. I believe researchers can explore this relationship further and uncover potentially important connections. Overall, I believe this project produced findings that extend existing knowledge on motivated reasoning and highlights potential contributing factors to the political polarization seen in the modern political climate.

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Appendix A: Study 1

Political Policy List

Block 1

1. Use camera drones to protect the border.
2. Provide liability release to companies that donate food to food pantries.
3. Subsidize American steel for infrastructure.
4. Make insurance more accessible to people with medical preconditions.
5. Provide tax breaks to companies using biodegradable materials.
6. Allocate more money toward technology in public school.

Block 2

1. Develop a high-speed train system across the U.S.
2. Provide job training and education to incarcerated individuals.
3. Make all plastics recyclable by 2030.
4. Provide congressional representation for the District of Columbia.
5. Offer tax breaks to families that adopt children.
6. Allow felons to vote upon release from prison.

Memory for Policy Attribution

Participants are presented with the list of political policies and asked what party they remember the policy was previously attributed to. (*1: Completely Confident Republican... 7: Completely Confident Democrat*)

Attributed Policy Liking

Participants are presented with the list of political policies, with attribution to either the Democrat or Republican party, and asked to indicate their liking for each policy. (*1: Very Good... 7: Very Bad*).

True Liking

Participants are presented with the list of political policies, with no party attribution, and asked to indicate their liking for each policy. (*1: Extremely Oppose... 7: Extremely Support*).

Political Ideology

1. My political ideology is: (*1: Very Liberal... 7: Very Conservative*)
2. Do you consider yourself more a Democrat, or more a Republican? (*1: Democrat... 7: Republican*)

Appendix B: Pilot Study – Policy Neutrality

Political Policy List

1. Provide funding to city governments to replace one-third of commercial gas pumps with electric vehicle charging stations.
2. Divert United States Department of Agriculture loan programs from natural disaster management to cover crop funding.
3. Allow universities to sell student data for commercial purposes to lower tuition costs.
4. require all-wheel anti-lock brakes on new vehicles.
5. implement a government-run car buyback program for those interested in purchasing low emissions vehicles.
6. increase funding to disaster relief institutions in the United States.
7. develop smaller, less-observable, surveillance drones to be used in investigating suspected criminal activity in the U.S.
8. reorganize primary school breaks to maximize overlap between student breaks and time taken off by parents to allow more family vacations.
9. introduce syringe lock-boxes around communities for safe syringe disposal for recreational drug users to reduce community spread of hepatitis.
10. develop polymer-fiber railroad cars to lower the cost of cross-country transportation.
11. create new hybrids of gasoline that improve gas mileage but allow a higher profit margin.
12. require all vehicle manufacturing companies to only manufacture vehicles that exceed 35 miles per gallon by 2028.
13. allow search engines increased access to personal information for advertising purposes.
14. allow tech companies access to private information during police investigations to better assist authorities.
15. abolish daylight savings time nationally.
16. decrease the amount of funding provided to students through federally-funded college loan programs.
17. implement term limits for the members of the U.S. House of Representatives.
18. increase the size of Native American reservations.
19. provide liability release to companies that donate food to food pantries.
20. make insurance more accessible to people with medical preconditions.
21. use camera drones to protect the border.
22. allocate more money toward technology in public schools.
23. provide tax breaks to companies using biodegradable materials.
24. develop a high-speed train system across the U.S.
25. provide job training and education to incarcerated individuals.
26. make all plastics recyclable by 2030.
27. provide congressional representation for the District of Columbia.
28. offer tax breaks to families that adopt children.
29. allow felons to vote upon release from prison.
30. subsidize American steel for infrastructure.

Policy Neutrality

Participants were presented with all 30 hypothetical political policies, and indicated to what extent which party they believed the policy came from on a 7-point Likert scale (*1: Completely Confident Democrat... 7: Completely Confident Republican*).

Appendix C: Study 2

Political Policy List

Block 1

1. Offer tax breaks to families that adopt children.
2. Develop polymer-fiber railroad cars to lower the cost of cross-country transportation.
3. Require all-wheel anti-lock brakes on new vehicles.
4. Divert United States Department of Agriculture loan programs from natural disaster management to
5. Allow tech companies access to private information during police investigations to better assist authorities.

Block 2

1. Decrease the amount of funding provided to students through federally-funded college loan programs.
2. Develop a high-speed train system across the U.S.
3. Allow search engines increased access to personal information for advertising purposes.
4. Subsidize American steel for infrastructure.
5. Abolish daylight savings time nationally.
6. Provide liability release to companies that donate food to food pantries.

Memory for Policy Attribution

Participants are presented with the list of political policies and asked what party they remember the policy was previously attributed to. (*1: Completely Confident Democrat... 7: Completely Confident Republican*)

Attributed Policy Liking

Participants are presented with the list of political policies, with attribution to either the Democrat or Republican party, and asked to indicate their liking for each policy. (*1: Extremely Support... 7: Extremely Oppose*).

True Liking

Participants are presented with the list of political policies, with no party attribution, and asked to indicate their liking for each policy. (*1: Extremely Oppose... 7: Extremely Support*).

Political Ideology

1. My political ideology is: (*1: Very Liberal... 7: Very Conservative*)
2. Do you consider yourself more a Democrat, or more a Republican? (*1: Democrat... 7: Republican*)

Political Identity Fusion

Considering my political party, I... (1: Strongly Disagree... 7: Strongly Agree)

1. Am one with my party.
2. Feel immersed in my party.
3. Have a deep emotional bond with my political party.
4. My party is me.
5. Will do more for my political party than any of the other group members would do.
6. Am strong because of my party.
7. Make my party strong.

Political Sophistication (Correct answers in bold)

1. Which party currently has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives? (**Democratic Party**, Republican Party, I do not know)
2. What party is more conservative than the other at the national level? (**Republican Party**, Democratic Party, Neither party is more conservative than the other, I do not know)
3. What job or political office is currently held by John Roberts? (**Chief Justice of the Supreme Court**, Senate Majority Leader, Chair of the Democratic National Committee, Chair of the Republican National Committee, I do not know)
4. Who is the current Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives? (**Nancy Pelosi**, Marjorie Taylor-Greene, Matt Gaetz, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Steny Hoyer, I do not know)
5. What job or political office is now held by Kamala Harris? (**U.S. Vice President**, U.S. House of Representatives Majority Leader, U.S. Secretary of Defense, U.S. Secretary of State, I do not know)
6. Whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the U.S. federal courts? (**The U.S. President**, The U.S. Senate, The U.S. House of Representatives, The U.S. Supreme Court, I do not know)
7. How long is the term of office for a U.S. Senator? (**6 years**, 2 years, 4 years, 8 years, I do not know)
8. What branch of government determines the constitutionality of a law? (**The Judicial Branch**, The Executive Branch, The Legislative Branch, I do not know)
9. How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to override a presidential veto? (**2/3**, 1/2, 3/5, 3/4, I do not know)
10. Who is the current U.S. Secretary of State? (**Anthony Blinken**, Alejandro Mayorkas, Rex Tillerson, Kristjen Nielsen, I do not know)
11. Who is the current U.S. Secretary of the Treasury? (**Janet Yellen**, Steven Mnuchin, Jacob Lew, Jerome Powell, I do not know)

Ingroup Self-Investment/Self-Definition

Considering my political party... (1: Strongly Disagree... 7: Strongly Agree)

Self-Investment - Solidarity

1. I feel a bond with my political party.
2. I feel solidarity with my political party.
3. I feel committed to my political party.

Self-Investment - Satisfaction

4. I am glad to be in my political party.
5. I think that my political party has a lot to be proud of.
6. It is pleasant to be in my political party.
7. Being in my political party gives me a good feeling.

Self-Investment - Centrality

8. I often think about the fact that I am in my political party.
9. The fact that I am in my political party is an important part of my identity.
10. Being in my political party is an important part of how I see myself.

Self-Definition - Individual Self-Stereotyping

11. I have a lot in common with the average person in my political party.
12. I am similar to the average person in my political party.

Self-Definition - Ingroup Homogeneity

13. People in my political party have a lot in common with each other.
14. People in my political party are very similar to each other.

Appendix D: IRB Consent Form

IMPLIED CONSENT DOCUMENT



Project Title: Perceptions and Opinions of Political Policies
Investigator: Dalton Bailey, Psychological Sciences, dalton.bailey980@topper.wku.edu

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you agree to participate in this project.

You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this research study.

In this document, I will explain in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may email any questions you have to help you understand the project.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please click the button below to give your consent and continue to the survey. Please print this page if you would like to keep a copy of this form.

- Nature and Purpose of the Project:** We are interested in what people think about certain political policies, and potential factors that influence their attitudes towards policies. Please share with us what you think.
- Explanation of Procedures:** You will participate in two parts for this project, each of which will take you about 20 minutes. In the first part, you will be asked to share your thoughts on various hypothetical policies. 24 hours later, in the second part of the project, we will ask you questions about your political ideology, knowledge of politics, and a few other questions about hypothetical policies.
- Discomfort and Risks:** No discomfort or risk beyond regular computer use is anticipated.
- Benefits:** You will receive partial course credit. Your responses will help us with this project.
- Confidentiality:** Your individual responses cannot be traced to you. Your responses are anonymous. Anonymous data will be uploaded to a public data repository to share with other interested researchers, but no one will be able to tell how you personally responded. Records will be viewed, stored, and maintained in private, secure files only accessible by the P.I. and advising faculty for three years following the study, after which time they will be destroyed.
- Refusal/Withdrawal:** Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

- Please click “Yes” if you wish to participate.
- Please click “No” if you do not wish to participate. You face no penalty for declining to participate.

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Robin Pyles, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-3360

Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter



*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY*

DATE: January 12, 2022

TO: Aaron Wichman
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1858957-1] Perceptions and opinions of political policies
REFERENCE #: IRB# 22-159
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: January 12, 2022

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by an *implied* consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Robin Pyles at (270) 745-3360 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.