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# Where The Two Trusts Meet: How Social Trust Influences Political Trust In The New Media Environment

## Abstract

In the modern democratic society, where it is difficult to get to know politicians in person or to fully internalize the complex political system, news articles strongly influence the forming and updating of political trust. Technical developments have created the layer of one's personal network between traditional media and its audience by allowing one to share any article with a few clicks. Reflecting this change in how one shares information, this dissertation investigates how online social trust influences one's political trust, a more deep-seated attitude.

There is little agreement on how to conceptualize and measure political trust. Study 1 shows how the NPTMS (New Political Trust Measurement Survey) demonstrates a gap between how the public creates the meaning of political trust and how scholars do. It then proposes more reliable and valid measures of political trust. To better simulate information exchange online, this dissertation introduces the concept of OIST (online interpersonal social trust), trust in a particular person from one's online social networks. Study 2 looks at the factors that lead to OIST and explores how to manipulate it in an experimental setting. By combining two different manipulation strategies—partner profile and flashcard exercise—OIST was successfully manipulated without influencing other types of social trust. Based on the NPTMS and OIST manipulation strategies, Study 3 connects OIST with political trust and experimentally demonstrates that they are causally related but moderated by the valence of the shared; receiving an article negatively depicting the government from a person one trusts resulted in a lower level of trust in the subjects of the article.

This dissertation uses OIST to also reflect the recent changes in how the public consumes news. It offers evidence that “regular people,” who are not necessarily experts or opinion leaders in a particular subject, can make others significantly readjust their levels of political trust. As an increasing number of people consume news through their online social networks, we should note that each individual can influence another's trust in government, and that the effect may accumulate with continued interactions.

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WHERE THE TWO TRUSTS MEET:  
HOW SOCIAL TRUST INFLUENCES POLITICAL TRUST  
IN THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Do Eon Lee

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2021

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WHERE THE TWO TRUSTS MEET:  
HOW SOCIAL TRUST INFLUENCES POLITICAL TRUST  
IN THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

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2021

Do Eon Lee

*Dedicated to my parents,  
Yoon Woo Lee and Eun Soog Song*

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## ABSTRACT

### WHERE THE TWO TRUSTS MEET: HOW SOCIAL TRUST INFLUENCES POLITICAL TRUST IN THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Do Eon Lee

Michael X. Delli Carpini, Ph.D.

In the modern democratic society, where it is difficult to get to know politicians in person or to fully internalize the complex political system, news articles strongly influence the forming and updating of political trust. Technical developments have created the layer of one's personal network between traditional media and its audience by allowing one to share any article with a few clicks. Reflecting this change in how one shares information, this dissertation investigates how online social trust influences one's political trust, a more deep-seated attitude.

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## Introduction

*“Americans Have Lost Faith in Institutions” –The Washington Post (March 3, 2017)*

*“Trust Is Collapsing in America” – The Atlantic (January 21, 2018)*

*“Falling Trust in Government Makes It Harder to Solve Problems, Americans Say”*

*– The New York Times (July 22, 2019)*

While definitions and terminology vary, “political trust” generally refers to citizens’ belief that the people, institutions, and processes of government can be counted on to act—effectively and honestly—in the public interest. As such, political trust is considered fundamental to complex, modern democracies, in which citizens elect officials to represent them and their interests. Yet various news reports and public surveys express concerns about the decades-long decline in political trust. According to recent surveys, less than 20% of Americans say that they can trust the government in Washington “to do what is right just about always or most of the time” (Pew Research Center, 2019). A recent example of this declining trust and its implications is the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people doubt whether the government is really keeping the situation under control, whether they are telling the truth, and even whether it is safe to trust and follow the recommendations made by government officials. More generally, how the public behaves may differ based on their level of political trust, in turn influencing the behavior of political institutions and officeholders (e.g., how they interact with the public, how they implement policies, etc.).

Given this theoretical and empirical importance, political trust has been the subject of interdisciplinary study for decades. One important strand of this research has been the role of the news media in facilitating or eroding levels of political trust. Rather than directly and personally interacting with the people and institutions of government, the public’s understanding of and engagement in politics is, to a great extent, mediated (Budnik, 2018). Reflecting this, previous research has



focused on how the practices of traditional news media (e.g., content, framing, formats) influence one's level of political trust (e.g., Jones, 2004; Miller et al., 1979; Moy & Hussain, 2011; Patterson, 1993; Tidmarch & Pitney Jr, 1985).

In the new media environment, however, the process of receiving and processing news now involves another element: people in one's online network sharing news articles. Scholars have long emphasized that social trust can influence not only what and how information gets shared with another person but also how the receiver perceives and reacts to the information. In the changing media landscape, where people interact and exchange information online freely and frequently, the amount of interpersonal social trust one holds in a trustee is expected to affect attitudinal and behavioral responses. When this shared information contains political information (i.e., political news), the social trust one holds to the information provider may even impact one's level of political trust. Therefore, this dissertation intends to answer the following question: How are social trust and political trust interrelated in the era of social media? More specifically, how do news articles shared by a trusted member of one's online social network influence one's level of political trust?

The main research question of this dissertation is expected to add to this literature in three ways. First, reflecting radical changes in the information environment, I broaden the consideration of the role of the media to include social media and the interactions taking place online. Over the last several decades, we are experiencing a major shift in how people encounter news, with an increasing number of people doing so through their social networks, such as Facebook or Twitter. This change in news media consumption raises the questions of if and how this additional layer of one's personal network between traditional media and the audience might influence what news to consume, how to consume it, and even how this exposure influences their political trust.

Second, and related, I argue that the key to understanding the mediating role played by online social networks in the relationship between news consumption and political trust is the concept of "online interpersonal social trust" (OIST) which I define as specific trust in the individuals one interacts with in the online sphere. These individuals may overlap with but are not limited to the people in one's offline social network. Previous studies have shown that interpersonal social trust plays an important role in how individuals consume and accept information (Giffin, 1967; Hovland et al., 1953; Légal et al., 2012). This dissertation extends this logic to include trusted individuals online as the "source of information." Specifically, I argue that news about government actions shared

by a trusted online “friend” affects people’s decisions on what to consume, how to respond to the news they have consumed, and thus, their level of political trust.

Third, I revisit political trust and social trust, both theoretically and methodologically. Despite their well-known importance in our society, both concepts are not always clearly defined or measured. Some scholars have pointed out that inconsistent findings from research involving one of these two forms of trust can be attributed to the problems related to their definitions and measurements. This dissertation attempted to conceptualize both terms based on how the public perceives the terms rather than how scholars have been defining them. Also, based on the findings, this dissertation provides a new measurement method of political trust and a manipulation strategy for OIST.

In what follows, I develop my argument and planned dissertation by doing the following. In the next section, I critically review existing research on political and social trust, focusing on major findings and areas of disagreement, the role of the media, the relationship between these two forms of trust, and inconsistencies in their conceptualization and measurement. Building on this review, I then provide my research questions and hypotheses. The next three sections lay out the methods, data, and the analyses of the three empirical studies that investigated the main research questions of this dissertation.

I hope that this dissertation will contribute to the conceptualization and measurement of political and social trust; to the investigation of any existing causal relationship between OIST and more deep-seated political trust; and to our academic understanding of the factors that contribute to the formation or erosion of political trust, doing so in a way that reflects the more complex political sphere and information environment in which we now live.

## Literature Review

### 2.1 What We Know About Political Trust

#### The Theoretical and Empirical Importance of Political Trust

The 17<sup>th</sup> Century political philosopher John Locke argued that the authority of government comes from individuals who “have given [the state of nature] up into the hands of the society, and therein to the governors, ... with this express of tacit trust” (Locke, 1980, p. 89). Political and social theorists from John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville to Emile Durkheim and Max Weber perceived trust as a building block for systems of society ranging from politics to the economy. Political trust seems particularly important in modern, representative democracies, where citizens cede power to representatives but retain the right to change officeholders if they are unsatisfied with their performance. Such a system requires trust both in the individuals and parties that hold office and in the institutions through which these representatives govern.

More recent scholars agree that “political trust is essential to the proper functioning of democracy” (Hetherington, 1998). As political trust is highly related to people’s belief in the political system working for the citizenry, without such trust, political institutions and their actions can be seen as illegitimate, threatening their very foundations (Almond & Verba, 2015). Easton (1965, 1975) and Gamson (1968) see political trust as a necessary buffer, increasing toleration for some degree of political dysfunction or underperformance that deviates from the public’s expectation toward the government. When the public holds low trust in the government or political institutions, there is a risk that people will demand institutional change that can threaten democratic practices (Anderson & Hoff, 2001; Fuchs & Klingemann, 1995; Hooghe & Marien, 2013; Hooghe & Quintelier, 2012; Kaase, 1999; Kaase & Newton, 1995; Norris, 1999). At a more systematic level, the stability of the government is crippled when the public holds a low level of political trust, and such association

appears in different countries and cultural contexts (Crozier et al., 1975).

Previous studies show that political trust influences both individual and aggregate political behaviors, such as policy preferences, support for political reform, compliance with the laws, and even engagement in solving social problems. For example, political trust has been observed to influence one's voting behavior—whom to vote for (Bergh, 2004; Hetherington, 1999; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Kselman & Niou, 2011) and even whether or not to cast a vote (Bäck & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2014; Bélanger & Nadeau, 2005; Grönlund & Setälä, 2007; Pattie & Johnston, 2001). In general, these studies do not find that high levels of political trust lead to increased voting. Rather, they suggest that political distrust influences voting behaviors.

In addition to voting behaviors, individuals' policy preferences are also related to levels of political trust. Political trust tends to have a positive relationship with support for government policies, especially for those that are redistributive in nature (e.g., Hetherington, 2005; Hetherington & Globetti, 2002 on racial policies; Rudolph, 2009; Rudolph & Evans, 2005 on policies involving government spending). Tyler and Degoey (1995) also found that societies with higher levels of political trust show individual's greater willingness to sacrifice when solving social dilemmas, such as during water shortages. And researchers have found evidence that higher levels of political trust are associated with increased compliance with laws and civic responsibilities such as tax-paying (e.g., Rudolph & Popp, 2009; Torgler, 2005).

Hetherington (2005) explained the mechanism of political trust influencing various political attitudes and behaviors as the following: political trust, which develops from assessments of the government's past performance, can lay the foundation of the public's sacrifice, as citizens must trust the government to function efficiently and fairly so as to believe that this sacrifice is not in vain.

### **The Decline of Political Trust**

Despite its fundamental role in creating both healthy and well-functioning political/social spheres, the percentage of American citizens trusting government gradually and consistently decreased between 1964 and 1994, according to data from the American National Election Survey (NES). Aggregate trust in politics increased again in the early 2000s, but this increase also proved temporary. According to the Pew Research Center's recent report, the U.S. is currently in "the longest period of low trust in government" since survey researchers asked questions about polit-

ical trust in 1958 (Pew Research Center, 2017). The fact that this decline is not limited to a specific generation (Pew Research Center, 2015) increases the level of concern regarding this trend. This 60-year trend has also been noted in surveys done by Gallup and other media corporations such as *ABC/Washington Post*, *CBS/New York Times*, and *CNN*. This decline includes but is not limited to trust in the institutions of government and politics. The same declining pattern in the trust in political leaders has been observed as well (Jones, 2016). In short, numerous public surveys conducted at different times by different entities with different questions all indicate that America is experiencing a consistent and extensive decline in political trust, raising the question of why this might be the case.

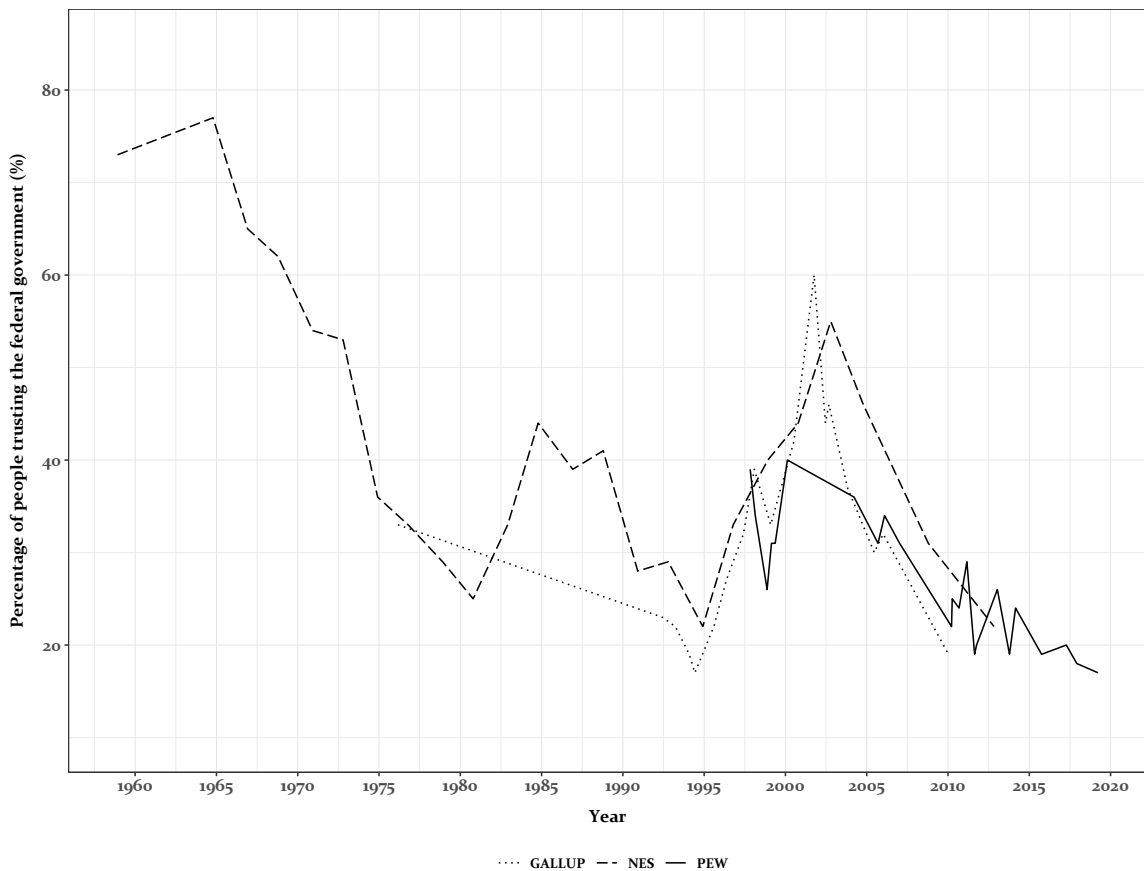


Figure 2.1: Trends in Political Trust (1958 – 2019)

### What Influences Political Trust?

Previous studies have investigated the antecedents of political trust to better understand not only the concept but also why we are experiencing its decline. This research focuses on the

attributes of both the trustor (i.e., the persons or groups bestowing their trust) and the trustee (i.e., the individuals, institutions, or systems upon which trust is bestowed).

One line of research manifests that the level of political trust depends on who the trustor is. Some of the factors related to trustors are directly related to individual characteristics, such as one's cognitive ability and personality traits. Previous studies argue that people use risk assessment strategies to assess how much trust to place in government and the political system more broadly. Citrin and Muste (1999) described political trust as "confidence that authorities will observe the rules of the game and serve the general interest." As their description shows, there is a set of expectations—observation of the rules of the game and the serving of the general interest in their definition—involved in the exchange of political trust, and previous research argues that people use their knowledge about the trustee to construct certain expectations (Levi & Stoker, 2000). Research shows that cognitive ability helps one analyze factual knowledge (e.g., the implementation of a policy, a certain comment made by a politician) and discern the political implications of news reports, such as motivations or goals of a politician and the actual impact of a certain policy (Hooghe et al., 2012). Therefore, cognitive ability has a significant effect, either directly or indirectly, on political trust (Deary et al., 2008; Schoon & Cheng, 2011; Schoon et al., 2010). Other individual-level attributes, such as one's emotions (e.g., Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012) and "Big Five" personality traits (e.g., Anderson, 2010a, 2010b; Mondak & Halperin, 2008), are also found to shape one's trust in government or politics. Grimmelikhuijsen (2012) demonstrates that political trust can be influenced via two different routes—the cognitive route, where the rational calculation of the benefits of government transparency leads to greater political trust, and the affective route, where positive emotional reactions to transparency lead to greater trust.

Some other factors are indirectly related to the trustor himself or herself but rather are systematic and societal variables that ultimately influence the formation of an individual's perception of the world and their perceived qualities of the trustees in question. Existing research provides some evidence that education assists in learning democratic values and processes, and greater awareness of when institutions are or are not meeting the expectations of the general public (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017). Formal education also equips citizens with the ability to acquire and process relevant information that lays a foundation for the perceived "trustworthiness" of the people and institutions of the government.

Another line of research on the antecedents of political trust focuses on the attributes of the trustee. Several studies, using different data sets and measures of political trust in different entities (e.g., general trust in the government, trust in the U.S. Supreme Court, trust in parliamentary systems, and trust in law enforcement authorities), found that perceived procedural fairness in political institutions plays a crucial role in the formation of political trust (e.g., Carman, 2010; Firestone et al., 2012; Grimes, 2006; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002; Tyler et al., 1996; Ulbig, 2002, 2008). Political events such as political scandals (Weatherford, 1987) or wars (Parker, 1995) also influence levels of political trust. So, too, do evaluations of politicians' personal characteristics (Citrin & Green, 1986). Yet another predictor of political trust is economic performance—from objective indicators (e.g., GDP) to subjective ones (e.g., consumer confidence) have been used to examine this relationship (e.g., Bovens & Wille, 2008; Chanley et al., 2000; Dalton, 2004; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2008; Keele, 2007).

Policy implementation of an administration and the subsequent societal impacts of the implementation are believed to influence levels of political trust as well. For example, concerns about immigration and the subsequent effects of immigration negatively influence the public's level of political trust (McLaren, 2017). Furthermore, concerns tied to the macroeconomic crisis such as retrenchment of the welfare system or social safety net leads to a general decline in political trust (Holmberg, 1999; Naurin, 2011; Newton, 2006). Taken as a whole, research on the antecedents of political trust suggests that the formation of political trust is dependent on a wide range of evaluative criteria. However, there are variances in the effects, even including their directionality, depending on the datasets and the scope of the trustee. Such inconsistent findings may be attributed to the complex nature of political trust itself, but scholars also point out inconsistencies in methodological designs and measurement of the concept (Miller & Listhaug, 1999; Van der Meer, 2017). A better and consistent measurement of political trust is expected to assist a better understanding of the relationship between political trust and its possible antecedents.

Despite some debates in finding the antecedents of political trust, previous studies generally demonstrate that government performance, information regarding this performance, and the use of this information by citizens in their assessments of government all appear to be important factors in levels of individual and collective political trust. Therefore, understanding how the public processes the information to create perceived trustworthiness of the government is crucial in this research.

## Media and Political Trust

Previous literature shows how information about the government can play a crucial role in the formation and updates of political trust. In contemporary democracies, citizens rarely interact personally with the people and institutions of government (Budnik, 2018), doing so instead through public representations constructed by the media. The policies developed and implemented by the government, how such policies are developed and implemented, and the effect of policy on citizens' lives are also largely understood through media. In short, political trust is built in large part on mediated information.

Various studies have explored the relationship between political trust and media-related variables (e.g., Jones, 2004; Moy & Hussain, 2011 on media consumption pattern; Dowling, 1989; Miller et al., 1979; Patterson, 1993; Tidmarch & Pitney Jr, 1985 on media content and tone). The earliest studies examining the effect of mass media on political trust focused on *media content*, especially negative portrayals of government. Most were done using observational data and methods, and consistently demonstrated an association between negative coverage of politicians and political events and lower levels of trust in politicians and the political system more generally (e.g., Dowling, 1989; Miller et al., 1979; Patterson, 1993; Tidmarch & Pitney Jr, 1985). This association was observed across various media outlets, including newspapers (Miller et al., 1979) and television (Bennett et al., 1999; Moy & Pfau, 2000; Robinson, 1976).

Other studies have found that *media framing* of issues and political candidates can influence political trust (e.g., Patterson, 1993). For example, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) conducted an experiment demonstrating that individuals who were exposed to strategy frames showed higher levels of political cynicism, a concept related to political trust. To explain the mechanism behind this relationship, scholars of cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1994) argue that media frames shape how viewers see and understand the world, especially regarding issues such as political trust that are largely built on mediated information, rather than personal experiences. The effect of media framing often occurs in interaction with the other aspects of media, such as the media content and the type of medium (Moy & Hussain, 2011).

In addition to media effects based on the content and framing, *media formats* also appear to influence levels of political trust. Robinson (1981) found that when audiences are exposed to



television news stories that are brief, fragmented, and without substantive content or context, they are more likely to feel that political processes and government activities are beyond their scope of comprehension. These feelings of detachment and disempowerment resulted in both an inability to express their self-interests and a lack of political trust. Comparatively, exposures to newspapers elicited a more positive or neutral effect on political trust (Avery, 2009; Moy & Scheufele, 2000).

In summary, previous studies provide suggestive evidence regarding the media's role in this relationship (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Miller & Krosnick, 2000). But there are still questions unsolved: the causal direction of the relationship between media consumption and political trust remains somewhat unclear, and media effects are often indirect and context-dependent.

### **Political Trust and the Development of the Internet**

Most of the studies investigating the relationship between media and political trust have focused on traditional forms of mass media, such as television, newspapers, and radio. However, the Internet has brought changes in the ways we acquire and interact with information fundamental to political trust. Therefore, the context-dependent nature of media's effect on political trust calls for an examination of how new media affects political trust. In the 1990s and early 2000s, researchers began to focus on the Internet's relationship to political trust. At the time of these studies, the Internet was in its infancy (Web 1.0) and mainly composed of static hyperlinks lacking any interactive features (O'Reilly, 2005). Scholars during this time approached this new technology from the point of view of social capital and civic engagement (e.g., Nie & Erbring, 2002; Uslander, 2004; Verba et al., 1995), rather than viewing it as a medium of information.

In the era of Web 2.0, various new forms of citizen involvement in politics emerged, including various experiments with "e-democracy" and "e-government" (Hilbert, 2009). Welch et al. (2004), using data from the Council on Excellence in Government, found that using government websites was positively associated with satisfaction in e-government as well as with trust in government. A similar result was found in the study by Tolbert and Mossberger (2006) that used the data from the Pew Research Center. As with earlier research, however, many studies failed to reflect the current use of the Internet: many still perceived the Internet as a largely one-way communication channel that facilitates citizens' interactions with the government.

Later in the 2000s, studies start finding that an increasing number of Americans consume

news through the Internet (e.g., Prior, 2007). Similarly, various surveys show that an increasing number of Americans now consume news via social media. A 2018 Pew Research Center survey estimated that 68% of Americans get news from social media (with an even higher percentage among younger people), with those reporting that they “often” get news from social media larger than those doing so from print newspapers. Although television remains the most popular source of news consumption, the population often getting news from this medium is decreasing, again especially among younger cohorts. Given this shifting landscape, it is important to revisit the relationship between media and political trust by redefining “media.”

Some research has attempted to study how the use of social media influences political trust. Ceron (2015), using Eurobarometer survey data, performed a cross-sectional analysis to explore the relationship between social media use and political trust. He found that people consuming news from Web 1.0 (information/news websites) had higher levels of trust, while those using social media had lower levels. Enli and Rosenberg (2018) conducted an online survey with 1,013 Norwegian citizens, a representative sample of the population. They focused on political trust in politicians based on different media contexts. A higher percentage of people reported trust in politicians in the social media context in relation to other traditional media contexts, such as talk shows, speeches, or interviews. The researchers attributed this difference to social media’s characteristics allowing users to generate the contents. With the user-created data, politicians can present a more positive and trustworthy side of themselves to appeal to more people. Furthermore, they proposed that this may also reflect people’s tendency to trust their friends and relatives more than the corporate media as argued by Metzger et al. (2010) (as cited in Enli & Rosenberg, 2018). Porumbescu (2017) used a sample of Koreans and investigated if their use of online media, only including (non-government) online newspapers, web portals, and online blogs, ultimately influence an individual’s level of political trust in a specific institution, the Seoul Metropolitan Government. He found a positive relationship between the use of online media and the expectation toward the institution, and the expectation had an inverse relationship with political trust in the institution. But his study did not restrict “online media” to social media that may create different findings than Internet use more generally. In general, studies in the field mostly cannot make a causal claim of social media usage increasing/decreasing one’s level of political trust nor explain the mechanism behind this relationship.

Among many changes social media has brought, this dissertation aims to focus on its effects

on the ways individuals acquire political information. Two changes seem particularly important as regards political trust. First, the social media environment has increased the number of ideologically distinct sources of information, and the ability of users to choose the media they attend to (Barberá, 2014; Messing & Westwood, 2014). Second, people often encounter news shared by their online networks (e.g., friends and/or family members), rather than directly from the news source. In other words, there are two steps involved in encountering news. This new form of “two-step flow” raises important questions regarding the relationship between media consumption and political trust. In particular, do levels of trust in the intermediary (i.e., the person sharing news) influence one’s choice of reading the article? Their attitudinal and behavioral responses to the information? And, ultimately, the influence of that information on their political trust? In order to answer these questions, I must first discuss the literature on trust in people, especially interpersonal social trust.

## **2.2 What We Know About Social Trust and Its Relationship to Political Trust**

Two main assumptions in trust research are that trust is inherent in all relationships and that it entails the assumption of taking risks (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). As all relationships do, social trust naturally involves three components—trustor, trustee, and action (Hardin, 1992). Scholars express trust relationships as the following: Trustor A trusts trustee B to do action X.

Scholars explain the process of a trustor determining whether to trust a trustee as a risk-taking process. Those expectations can be personal (e.g., expecting someone to buy a present for one’s birthday) or more social (e.g., expecting other people to pay taxes). But there is always the risk that the other person fails to meet expectations. Those risks may originate from inevitable uncertainty about the future, a fundamental characteristic of human nature, threats incorporated in human relationships due to the actions of other people, or any unexpected state of the world (Sztompka, 1999). Social trust decreases the perceived amount of risk entailed in transactional relationships. As Bradach and Eccles (1989) write, “trust is a type of expectation that alleviates the fear that one’s exchange partner will act opportunistically.” The formation and maintenance of social trust are generally considered to be iterative. That is, the trustworthiness of the trustee is updated as the trustor’s expectations are met or not met. In other words, continual updates and the accumulation of experiences with people around oneself shapes social trust.

## **The Theoretical and Empirical Importance of Political Trust**

Research suggests that social trust plays several important roles, for both individual transactions and larger societal ones. On an individual level, sociologists attribute generalized life satisfaction to social trust (Swords, 1998). Similarly, organization and management studies have found that social trust within an organization or interpersonal trust toward managers leads to increased job satisfaction (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Rich, 1997). Moreover, social trust has a direct and indirect relationship to social capital. For instance, Schelling (1978) found that social trust toward one person can create reciprocal trust.

On a larger societal level, Putnam (1995) described social trust as an important solution for collective action problems based on the social capital produced. Communities with greater social trust have tighter connections among members, increasing the frequency of cooperation, and further enhancing levels of social trust—often referred to as a “virtuous cycle.” Some researchers have also connected the positive effects of social trust to higher participation in political activities (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 1995; Sullivan & Transue, 1999). Brewer (1985) demonstrated that social trust creates spaces for other members of the organization to “free ride,” which allows members of a community to benefit from the larger social capital.

Researchers posit that trust affects the assessment of the future behavior of the other party and the interpretation of the other party’s past and present actions. These changes can reduce the amount of perceived risk, making social trust a necessary but not sufficient condition for social capital, such as cooperation and collective actions (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). In economic game settings and organizational contexts, researchers have also found that social trust engenders cooperation, though there are disagreements on whether social trust acts as a direct antecedent or a moderator (e.g., Axelrod, 1984; Gambetta, 1988; Hwang & Burgers, 1997; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Wrightsman, 1992).

## **The Relationship between Social Trust and Political Trust**

The relationship between social trust and political trust has received some attention from scholars. Some argue that social trust is positively associated with political trust. This argument is based on a theory that when someone is involved in civic activities, often with the intention to engage with government-related works or to influence government, he or she tends to participate based on

the belief that his or her involvement would actually lead to changes in politics. Without having a belief that their work would bring changes, citizens would not spend their time and efforts to partake in civic activities (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Also, trust in fellow citizens would make participation in different forms of community and civic affairs easier, less risky, and more rewarding for citizens (Gambetta, 1988; Muller & Seligson, 1994). Participation in civic activities, which are accelerated by social trust, induces higher trust in politics, government, and institutions writ large (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Moore et al., 1985; Putnam, 2000).

Several studies provide evidence for this hypothesized relationship. These studies are mostly based on societal-level data from multiple countries over multiple years. Based on the development of a country's democratic and social system and interpersonal social trust, Inglehart (1990) argued that interpersonal trust is a prerequisite to the formation of and development of the modern democratic system. This argument echoes with Almond and Verba's (1963) finding in *The Civic Culture*. Inglehart acknowledged that it is impossible to conclude if social trust caused the development of a modern social structure or vice versa, but he supported his argument that they are positively related to each other based on aggregated cross-national data. Similarly, Muller and Seligson (1994) revisited Inglehart's study and also found a positive correlation between political trust and social trust. Based on the pooled General Social Surveys (GSS) from 1972 to 1994, along with aggregated contextual data, Brehm and Rahn (1997) also found a significant correlation between interpersonal trust and confidence in national institutions. More recently, Zmerli and Newton (2008), who used the European Social Survey (ESS) and the United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (USCID) surveys, also found a similar result. In addition to using different sets of survey data, they controlled the association for the variables that are known to be associated with either social trust or trust in government (e.g., education, age, ethnicity, media consumption, social integration, religious beliefs, urban-rural environments, happiness, and life satisfaction) in order to obtain a more general sense of the association. Various other cross-national empirical research also found a strong correlation between social trust and political trust, which was measured through such things as satisfaction with democracy and/or government and confidence in public institutions (e.g., parliament, police, civil service) (Inglehart, 1997, 1999; Newton, 1999, 2001; Newton & Norris, 2000).

Despite the *prima facie* plausibility of the theory and country-level empirical findings consistent with it, there are also studies showing no relationship between the two types of trust. Multiple

survey-based studies found little evidence of a positive association between social trust and political trust at the individual level (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Newton & Norris, 2000; Orren, 1997). For instance, Kaase (1999) used multiple Eurobarometer surveys and the European/World Values Studies in order to find if there is any statistical association between social trust and political trust. He used three years of studies—1981, 1990, and 1996—from nine different countries—France, Great Britain, Germany (West), Italy, Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Spain, and Ireland. Generalizing across countries and time, and he found only a small statistical relationship between interpersonal trust and trust in government. Although non-significant findings generally pointed to the relationship he posited in his hypotheses, he concludes that these two forms of trust appear to be largely independent of each other. Other individual-level studies support this view (Newton, 2007). Even when the concept of political trust is expanded to include political confidence, social trust was found to be independent of political trust or confidence (Kaase, 1999; Newton, 2001).

In summary, previous efforts to find a connection between political trust and social trust have produced mixed results, with aggregate studies showing a positive association, and individual-level studies finding no or only small associations. Furthermore, given that these studies are observational, it is difficult to conclude if there is any causal relationship existing between the two types of trust.

### **Social Trust and Information**

This dissertation, unlike previous studies, aims to find the causal relationship between social trust and political trust by focusing on the trustee's role as a deliverer of the mediated information. In addition to its relationship to social capital, social trust, especially interpersonal trust, appears to influence people's exchange and processing of information. Previous studies found that social trust leads people to exchange more information and to perceive the information more positively. These studies found social trust to be antecedents or mediators of information exchanges, with some finding trust to be a necessary condition for knowledge sharing (e.g., Chih-Chien, 2004; Schepers & Van Den Berg, 2007; Willem & Scarbrough, 2006). In cases where trust does not exist, people refused to make efforts to share their knowledge (Markus, 2001). The argument that social trust facilitates active information exchange is supported through various studies that implemented different methodologies. Andrews and Delahaye (2000) showed that the perceived trustworthiness of a person plays a crucial role in the knowledge-sharing process through semi-structured inter-

views. They found that people with higher trust are more likely to share knowledge with the trusted other; no sharing of knowledge took place in the absence of trust. Using linear structural equations and multiple regression models on survey data, Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) found that trust plays a significant role in resource exchange within the team. Business units with high perceived trustworthiness were positively and directly related to the extent of resource exchange between units. The positive relationship between social trust and the amount of information exchanged is also supported in an experiment by Roberts and O'Reilly (1974). There is evidence that the quality of the information also changes more positively. Andrews and Delahaye (2000) found that people tended to share more useful information with people they trust more. The subjects of this study demonstrated that information exchange with a trusting person involves filtering unimportant or incorrect information. A similar result was observed in Penley and Hawkins' (1985) random survey study and Zand's (1972) experimental study as well. Mayer and his colleagues (1995) even found that trust makes people share more personally vulnerable information based on the affective connection social trust forms between two individuals.

In addition to the positive changes social trust brings to the informant, social trust influences how the recipient approaches the shared information. Perceptions of the accuracy of information become more positive. Benton and his colleagues (1969) conducted an experiment based on game theory to explore how the information recipient perceives the accuracy of information provided based on differing levels of trust the recipient holds toward the provider. The information recipient was more likely to doubt the information when one held a lower level of social trust in the information provider than when one held a higher level of social trust. Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) found a similar effect of trust through their survey with four different organizations that varied in size and the field. They found a statistically significant correlation between the trust in superiors (trustee) and the estimation of accuracy of information shared by the trustee across all organizations.

In addition to the perception of information accuracy, Légal et al. (2012) found that personal trust alters one's acceptance of a message and the level of perceived persuasiveness of the message. The researchers manipulated the level of trust in the message provider of the experiment by subliminally priming one group of subjects by showing a series of verbs and phrases such as "to trust," "to approve," "to accept," and "to agree," and the control group showing a series of unre-

lated verbs and phrases. The subjects who were primed with the trust-related expressions perceived the message provider as more trustworthy and likable compared to those in the control condition. The experiment exhibited that participants showed both a higher level of trust in the message and a higher intention to follow what the message suggested when they perceived the source as more trustworthy. The influence of the trustor's perception of the trustee on the acceptance of the message has been studied for decades. Trustee's qualities such as expertness, reliability, intentions, dynamism, and personal attraction are known to influence the trustworthiness of the trustee and the acceptance of the message at the ultimate level (Giffin, 1967; Andersen & Clevenger, 1963 for a summary).

In sum, previous studies, using various methods and different contexts, suggest that social trust can improve the amount, accuracy, acceptance, and persuasiveness of information. It does so primarily through lowering the perceived risk and costs associated with transactional relations (e.g., Kankanhalli et al., 2005).

### **2.3 Conceptualizing and Measuring Political and Social Trust, and the Relationship Between Them**

Several broad conclusions can be drawn from my reviews of the literature on political and social trust. Normative and applied theorists consider political and social trust to be important factors in the maintenance of healthy democratic societies and politics. Empirical research finds, at least suggestive if context-dependent and sometimes inconsistent, evidence of the positive effects of both forms of trust at the individual and societal levels. The mass media and the more static, one-way elements of the Internet are important contributors (in negative and positive ways) to levels of political trust. There is limited research on the implications of social media for political trust, and evidence of a relationship between social trust and political trust is mixed at best.

Drawing more fine-grained conclusions or developing research questions or hypotheses for future research is made difficult, however, by the inconsistent ways in which both forms of trust are conceptualized and measured.

#### **The Conceptualization and Measurement of Political Trust**

The distinction between trust in people (Citrin, 1974) versus trust in institutions (Miller, 1974) has played out in academic debates regarding the definition and the measurement of political



trust. Easton (1965) first captured this distinction through his concepts of “diffuse” and “specific” support. He defined diffuse support as “the generalized trust and confidence that members invest in the various objects of the system as ends in themselves” (p. 45). This kind of generalized political trust refers to public support for a political system and the formal institutions and processes that comprise it. Specific support refers to trust in officeholders, as individuals or as parties. Easton saw the maintenance of diffuse support as the more important for the long-term health of democracy, since specific support, while important, can be addressed through changes in the individuals and parties who hold office. He also saw these two concepts as largely distinct, though he acknowledges that persistent levels of low specific support could erode diffuse support over time.

Miller (1974) used data from the University of Michigan Survey Research Center’s national cross-sectional election surveys conducted in 1964, 1966, 1968, and 1970.<sup>1</sup> To measure political trust as diffuse support, he used five survey questions regularly used in the national cross-sectional surveys: 1) “How much of the time do you think you can *trust* the government in Washington to do what is right?” 2) “Would you say the government is pretty much run by *a few big interests* looking out for themselves or that it is run for the *benefit of all* the people?” 3) “Do you think that people in the government waste *a lot* of the money we pay in taxes, waste *some* of it or *don’t waste very much of it*?” 4) “Do you feel that almost all of the people running the government are smart people who usually *know what they are doing*, or do you think that quite a few of them *don’t seem to know what they are doing*?” and 5) “Do you think that *quite a few* of the people running the government are a little crooked, *not very many* are, or do you think *hardly any* of them are crooked at all?” Miller documented a decline in what he called “general political trust” among the U.S. public over this period and attributed this decline to dissatisfaction with political events and experiences writ large. Citrin (1974), in response, argued that Miller’s measures and analysis did not sufficiently distinguish between “dissatisfaction with current government policy positions, dissatisfaction with the outcomes of ongoing events and policies, mistrust of incumbent officeholders, and rejection of the entire political system” (p. 987), echoing Easton’s definitions of specific and diffuse support.

Since the early 1960s, various surveys have included efforts to measure political trust. The 1964 American National Election Studies (ANES) conducted by the Survey Research Center and

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<sup>1</sup>The datasets included respondents’ perspectives on public policy on various societal and political issues, along with measures of political cynicism. He interpreted political cynicism as “hostility toward political and social leaders, the institutions of government, and the regime as a whole” and “a negative orientation toward the political system” (p. 951).

Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan, introduced one of the most widely used measures. The questionnaire starts with a specific instruction to “[not] refer to Democrats or Republicans in particular, but just to the GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL.” This scale of generalized political trust in government is composed of five different questions as the following:

1. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right:
  - Just about always
  - Most of the time
  - Or only some of the time
2. Would you say the government is:
  - Pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves
  - Or that it is run for the benefit of all the people
3. Do you think that people in government
  - Waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes
  - Waste some of it
  - Or don't waste very much of it
4. Do you feel that:
  - Almost all of the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing
  - Or do you think that quite a few of them don't seem to know what they're doing
5. Do you think that:
  - Quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked
  - Not very many are
  - Or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all

Many survey questionnaires that appeared after the 1964 ANES survey adapted similar wording and phrases to measure the public's political trust. Yet, as the 1964 ANES survey focused specifically on generalized political trust, other surveys started to incorporate a wider range of specific aspects or objects of government, such as the incumbent Congress and presidency (Abramson & Finifter, 1981), members of Congress (Parker & Parker, 1993), and local government (Baldassare, 1985).

Citrin's (1974) study is one of the studies that showed that diffuse support and specific support are distinct measures of political trust. His analysis of the 1972 National Election Study showed general support for President Johnson and widespread mistrust of "government in general." He argued that general trust or mistrust in government fails to fully explicate if the political mistrust is coming from those who are politically alienated or from those who specifically mistrust particular incumbents without mistrusting the general political system or values tied in democracy. Abramson and Finifter (1981) also investigated if diffuse and specific supports are different types of political trust using the 1978 post-election survey conducted by the Center of Political Studies of the University of Michigan. In their study, they asked questions on how much trust the public has in President Carter and the Carter administration along with the U.S. Congress at the time. The researchers found that there was no evidence to distinguish diffuse support from specific support, as Easton (1965) argued. Yet, they stated that further research is needed to explain why no distinction was found—it was unclear if the questions did not clearly distinguish the system from the incumbents or if the respondents were not distinguishing the concepts.

As research in this area expanded, so too did the terminology used in questions. In addition to "political support," concepts such as "political mistrust," "distrust," "skepticism," and "cynicism," were introduced, all designed to capture overlapping elements of the larger concept of political trust (Cook & Gronke, 2005). New survey questions included the role of money in influencing public policies (Agger et al., 1961), as well as negatively valenced phrases such as "people are very frequently manipulated by politicians" (Agger et al., 1961), "all politicians are bad—some are just worse than others" (Citrin & Elkins, 1975), and "parties only care about winning elections" (Baloyra, 1979).

Yet another variation in efforts to measure political trust focused on varying the specific actions of the government. For example, during the 2012 presidential campaign, an *ABC News/Washington Post* poll asked respondents whether they trusted Barack Obama or Mitt Romney to do a better job regarding 15 different issues, including supporting small businesses, protecting the middle class, handling the economy, handling taxes, and dealing with social issues such as abortion and gay marriage.

In short, while political trust is believed to be an important factor in the health of a democracy, there is little agreement on how best to conceptualize or measure this concept. Various studies and surveys constructed questions for political trust measuring both generalized and specific trusts.

However, based on previous studies, it is difficult to conclude whether generalized political trust and specific political trust are different concepts or not, at least in the minds of citizens.

### **The Conceptualization and Measurement of Social Trust**

Social trust has been categorized into three different types—personalized trust, particularized trust, and generalized trust—depending on who the trustee is. According to Draude et al. (2018), personalized trust is built through direct face-to-face interactions with a specific person (see also Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Newton, 2001; Whitener et al., 1998; Williams, 2001). Particularized trust is built on the sharing of certain social identities, such as gender, race, or partisanship. Unlike a personalized trust, particularized trust does not require personal interaction, although direct interactions with someone from a particular group can form or update the level of particularized trust in people from that group. Lastly, generalized trust refers to trust in “people in general.” While personalized trust can be based on trustworthiness that is accumulated by past interactions, trust in a stranger cannot be based on an experience-based notion of trustworthiness. Thus, unlike other types of trust, generalized trust is often referred to as the “moralistic trust” as it is based more upon the presumption that strangers of this society would also share fundamental moral values oneself follows (Uslaner, 2002).

Scholars have used mainly surveys and experiments to measure social trust. Similar to political trust, the conceptualization of social trust, including the meaning, the causes, and the dimensions of social trust, is still debatable. This disagreement further creates disagreements on how social trust should be measured. Social trust has been measured either directly through surveys or indirectly through experiments. Surveys, measuring self-reported trust, have been used since the 1940s. One of the oldest measures of social trust appeared in the 1942 survey conducted by the Office of Public Opinion Research that asked: “Do you think most people can be trusted?” (Bauer, 2015). This question asking for trust in “most people” was further developed by Rosenberg (1956)—he constructed a Guttman scale including five questions regarding generalized social trust. Having five-scale answer choices, questions were as following:

1. Some people say that most people can be trusted. Others say you can't be too careful in your dealings with people. How do you feel about it?
2. Would you say that most people are more inclined to help others or more inclined to look out for themselves?

3. If you don't watch yourself, people will take advantage of you.
4. No one is going to care much what happens to you, when you get right down to it.
5. Human nature is fundamentally cooperative.

This question set has been modified and used in different public surveys, such as GSS, WVS, and ESS, since then. However, there are some issues raised regarding the validity of the questions. Items used in the standard social trust questions may conflict with each other. For example, Miller and Mitamura (2003) pointed out that trusting most people and being “too careful in dealing” with most people are not necessarily opposite from each other. Also, Uslaner (2011) points out that trust-related indicators stay too stable over time. He argued that there is the possibility that people have difficulty fully understanding the meaning of the question. Furthermore, these survey questionnaires are mostly focused on measuring the generalized trust of the public.

Experimentalists approached the measurement of social trust differently by emphasizing the need to focus more on experience-based trust, or personalized trust. They believed that trust can be measured indirectly by making inferences that trusting expectations can be observed through one's decisions, behaviors, and reactions toward another person. This argument is based on the assumption that social trust is a cooperative behavior in experimental game settings, or at least it is a potential factor generating cooperative behaviors (Bohnet, 2008; Deutsch, 1960). Deutsch (1960) conducted an experiment using the prisoner's dilemma to measure social trust between two individuals, and the experimental approach in measuring social trust was developed by Berg and his colleagues (1995) who created the investment game, the classical trust game. Scholars further modified experimental settings and social contexts embedded in the games to better measure social trust and its formation. For example, Granberg et al. (1975) incorporated communication in a prisoner's dilemma experiment and found that communication between the players further enhances cooperation between them. Burt and Knez (1995) examined the effect of having third-party members—close friends, acquaintances, or competitors—in an experimental game setting, which is mostly constructed as an interaction between two people. They found that having other people in the two-person game settings makes people more certain about trusting or distrusting attitudes toward the partner in the game. Other factors such as group identity (e.g., ingroup favoritism by De Cremer and Van Vugt (1999)), group size (e.g., De Cremer & Van Vugt, 1999; Sato, 1988), culture and nationality of participants (e.g., Hayashi et al., 1999; Yamagishi, 1988) have been manipulated

for more extensive understandings of social trust. In short, experiments, in comparison to surveys, measured social trust in more diverse settings dealing with specific reactions. However, there are also shortcomings in experiments, as it is still unclear if the trust is the actual or only motivation for the observed behaviors (such as cooperation). Some scholars argue that the cooperative behaviors observed in these experiments may originate, or partially originate, from self-interest, competitive spirits, or gift-giving (Cook & Cooper, 2003; Ermisch et al., 2009).

In order to overcome the shortcomings of both surveys and experiments, some scholars have utilized different definitions of social trust or attempted to combine both methods to measure social trust. For example, Rotter (1967) attempted to measure interpersonal trust using a survey. By defining trust as a “generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word, promise, oral, or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on” (p.653), he created 25 trust-related questions and 15 filler questions, which are not related to trust measurement but to hide the purpose of the questionnaire, to measure interpersonal social trust. His definition treated trust as a personality factor that can be used in and applied to a wider setting in comparison to trust being measured through specific reactions under specific contexts as experimental methods did. Some experimentalists attempted to incorporate direct measures of social trust by including survey questions as one of the measures in experiments to examine if and to what extent trusting behavior measured through an experiment can be predicted by self-reports (e.g., Fehr et al., 2003; Glaeser et al., 2000). Yet, these attempts yielded inconsistent conclusions regarding which question from self-reports best predicts with the “trusting behaviors” measured through experiments (Bauer & Freitag, 2018).

Previous literature on conceptualization and measurement of social trust indicates that the ongoing debates on how social trust should be conceptualized create disagreements on how it should be measured. Yet, studies show that different approaches in measurement are needed depending on which type of social trust is to be measured.

### **Conceptualizing and Measuring the Relationship between Social and Political Trust**

There are several reasons why the evidence for a relationship between social and political trust, discussed earlier, is mixed and inconsistent. First, the conceptualization and measurement of political trust have varied widely, as explained in the previous section. In considering the objects of political trust, a distinction can be made between the representational (such as parties, parliaments,

and cabinets, which are represented by partisanship) and the implementation components (such as the legal branch of the state and the police) of the political system. However, most studies merge these two aspects of politics together. Rothstein and Stolle (2008), for example, argue that the legal and administrative branches of the government, which mainly handle public policies, have a strong association with citizens' satisfaction with political institutions, and thus might show a clearer and stronger positive association with social trust. As *politics* is composed of numerous entities, and some studies find that trust in different political entities differs, political trust in different entities can create mixed results in its relationship with social trust.

Second, researchers have differed in their levels of analysis, with some suggesting that the relationship between political trust and social trust can only be found at a macro level. For example, Keele (2007) constructed time series data regarding trust in government from nearly 200 surveys archived at the Roper Center for Public Opinion. By looking at macro-level trends in both political and social trust, he found that social capital, including social trust, is one of the clearest drivers of the decline in political trust. Descriptively, both forms of trust have declined over the same period of time, and statistically, social trust exerted a powerful effect on political trust. Similarly, Newton (2001) found a positive correlation between social and political trust using data from the World Values Survey data that included 42 countries from 1991 to 1995. For countries such as Finland and Japan, that did not follow the general correlational trend, he conducted a case analysis by taking into consideration the economic, political, and cultural backgrounds of the time. By doing so, he concluded that social trust and political trust are positively correlated at the aggregate system level. Yet, he points out that the relationship is not definitive—the two types of trust are likely to be positively associated with each other but external circumstances, such as the perpetuation of political corruption, high inflation or unemployment, or defeat in wars, can break the relationship between the two trusts. Such national-level factors turned out to be influential elements in his analysis. Newton attributed such aggregate-level relationships to the characteristics of social capital and civil society. Both are system-level characteristics, rather than individual ones.

Finally, and most important to my research, most previous studies that connect political trust with social trust focus on generalized trust, the type of trust in “people in general.” While there is a logic to this bias, the contemporary social media environment arguably makes “personalized” and “particularized” social trust more relevant to views about politics, including trust in politics,

reflecting how the public consumes political news these days. In this dissertation, I aim to focus on personalized social trust that is formulated through online relationships and explore its relationship to political trust in the changing media environment.

#### **2.4 Central Research Question and Hypotheses**

The studies discussed in my literature reviews found mixed results regarding the relationship between social trust and political trust—studies done on a macro level showed a positive association, while studies done on a micro-level exhibited little-to-no relationship. In addition, many of these studies exclusively focused on generalized social trust—trust in “people in general.” This dissertation proposes a new argument for the relationship between political trust and social trust in the digital media environment: that one’s trust in specific online friends or contacts influences the level of political trust, doing so in part through the sharing of positive or negative news about government and politics.

As societies become larger and more complex, mediated information plays an increasingly crucial role in forming one’s political trust—more so than direct experiences. In the contemporary information environment, however, an increasing number of people are consuming news through their social networks, such as Facebook or Twitter; rather than directly consuming news from traditional news outlets, people often read articles that are shared by trusted online friends, creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of the classic “two-step flow model” of communication.

The proposed relationship between political trust and social trust exhibits some differences with the traditional two-step flow of communication. First, this dissertation focuses on the form of social trust involved in this relationship as “online interpersonal social trust (OIST),” which I define as trust in the particular people in one’s online social networks. Second, this dissertation does not focus on reprocessing, interpreting, or reframing the content but more on sharing the selected message to the people on one’s online network with simple expressions such as whether one finds the message credible/incredible, right/wrong, or left/right. Furthermore, it is worth noting that this sharing of mediated information through one’s online network is not necessarily representative of what’s being mediated but of the sharer’s point of view.

OIST, the type of social trust at the core of this proposed relationship, can be differentiated from generalized trust and particularized trust, as both forms of social trust are more related to trust



in a particular group or public in general. In that sense, OIST has some similarities with personalized trust as it is built through interactions with another individual, but OIST can be distinguished from personalized trust as well. Previous literature defines personalized trust to be built through direct face-to-face interactions (Draude et al., 2018; Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Newton, 2001; Whitener et al., 1993; Williams, 2001). This dissertation characterizes OIST to include personalized interactions with another individual, yet the interactions are expected to take place in an online environment where face-to-face interactions are not necessary. Throughout this dissertation, I attempted to simulate online interactions in which we get both limited information about and shared experiences with the trustee. As many people tend to follow “real” friends in online platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), many of the trustees online and offline may overlap, but it is difficult to expect a group of either OIST trustees or personalized trust trustees to be a subset of the other.

While my proposed relationship between OIST, the sharing of differently valenced news stories, and its impact on political trust are similar to prior research on “source credibility,” there are some important differences as well. Source credibility has two cognitive components—expertness and trustworthiness (e.g., Hovland et al., 1953; Kelman & Hovland, 1953), with credibility in news media mainly established through the perceived ethics, standards, and expertise of journalists (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Ireton & Posetti, 2018). I argue, however, that in the contemporary online environment, trustworthiness is the more important of the two elements of source credibility, and that it resides with the person sharing the information as much as or more than it does with the news organization itself. As a result, this dissertation limits its scope to focus on the trustworthiness of the intermediate information source (i.e., the non-experts in one’s online networks).

My argument also has similarities and differences with prior research on “source similarity.” Previous studies have largely equated source similarity in relation to demographic characteristics and attitudes/behaviors on particular issues/situations. Many studies demonstrated that encountering thoughts from demographically similar others increases the perceived validity of those thoughts and thus can affect one’s own attitudes (e.g., Goethals & Nelson, 1973; Turner, 1991; Young, 2015). In addition to demographic similarities, I expand the notion of similarity and its impact on OIST to include several other social, cultural, and political attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, OIST involves *shared experiences* between the trustor and trustee to go beyond the concept of perceived *similarity* and to be more related to *trustworthiness*.

In the changing media landscape, people from one's network are now placed between one-self, the news one consumes, and the effect of that news on our attitudes and opinions. Reflecting on this change, I theorize that OIST is a crucial element in understanding the effect of the news on one's political trust. Given this, the main research question I intend to answer is:

**RQ: How are social trust and political trust interrelated in the era of social media? More specifically, how do news articles shared by a trusted member of one's online social network influence one's level of political trust?**

Prior research suggests that trust in the source of information, most often defined as the news outlet or expert being quoted, increases the likelihood of consuming and accepting the information and the persuasiveness of the information. I extend this logic to trusted members of one's online network, arguing that news about government actions shared by a trusted online "friend" will affect what we consume, how we respond to the news we have consumed, and thus, our political trust. The following hypotheses will be tested in Study 3 of my dissertation:

- H1: Individuals are more likely to attend to news shared by a trusted member of one's social network than by a less or untrusted member.**
- H2: Individuals are more likely to agree with news shared by a trusted member of one's social network than by a less or untrusted member.**
- H3: Individuals are more likely to find news shared by a trusted member of one's social network more convincing than by a less or untrusted member.**
- H4: News articles shared by a trusted member of one's social network that frame stories of government action in a positive light will increase political trust more than those shared by a less or untrusted member.**
- H5: News articles shared by a trusted member of one's social network that frame stories of government action in a negative light will decrease political trust more than those shared by a less or untrusted member.**

Given that studies have shown that the level of social trust is influential in the spread of information (i.e., Messing & Westwood, 2014; Turcotte et al., 2015), I also hypothesize that greater OIST will increase the likelihood of the receiver sharing the news story with others:

**H6: Individuals are more likely to share the information received from a trusted mem-**

**ber of one's social network than from a less or untrusted member.**

Finally, I argue that the relationships between social and political trust will be affected by the strength of one's prior political views about the specific issue involved. I expect individuals to adjust the level of OIST in the other person based on the agreeableness of the shared content if they hold strong political opinions.

**H7: For strong partisans, if the news shared by a member of one's social network is consistent with an individual's prior view on the issue, the level of social trust in the sharer will increase.**

**H7: For strong partisans, if the news shared by a member of one's social network is inconsistent with an individual's prior view on the issue, the level of social trust in the sharer will decrease.**

To test these hypotheses, I intend to conduct an online experiment in Study 3 that manipulates the level of online interpersonal social trust as well as the topic and tone of the shared news stories. Before doing so, however, two prior issues that emerge from the literature review need to be addressed. First, how best to conceptualize and measure political trust (Study 1)? Second, how best to conceptualize and manipulate OIST (Study 2)?

# 3

## Study 1

### Conceptualizing and Measuring Political Trust

Political trust is a complex concept. The concept of *politics* is composed of various people, institutions, and even systems. Similarly, *trust* has many meanings, levels, and objects of focus. My literature review revealed continuing disagreements on what political trust actually means, how to measure it, and how political trust in different political entities is related to or is different from each other. The conceptual complexity of both *politics* and *trust* is reflected in the range of ways political trust (and similar concepts) are measured. These measures range from broad questions on trust in government or politics in general; to more specific questions that focus on different levels (e.g., local, state, or national) or institutions of government (e.g., Congress, the courts, the presidency); to trust in specific people or organizations (e.g., Donald Trump, the Democratic Party); to specific issues (e.g., trust in the government to effectively address climate change). No consensus exists on the “best” measure, or even on whether a single measure or set of measures can effectively capture the concept. Yet, reliable and valid measurement of political trust is essential in understanding its sources and effects.

Given this, Study 1 of my dissertation aims to 1) better understand the structure of political trust, particularly about how the public formulates it, and 2) develop a valid and reliable measure to be used in my subsequent study. By constructing the new measurement of political trust, this chapter examines how demographic profiles of individuals influence the interrelation between different kinds of political trust.

To answer these questions, this chapter is composed of two different parts: 1) accumulation and analysis of previously asked political trust-related questions; 2) creation and execution of a new survey questionnaire on political trust, and exploratory factor analyses intended to uncover

underlying dimensions of political trust and identify specific questions to include in Study 3.

### **3.1 Study 1a. Accumulation of Previously Asked Political Trust-Related Questions**

In political trust-related questions, terms *trust* and *confidence* are two frequently used terms, and they are often used interchangeably.

Despite the similarities in the dictionary definition, trust theorists have distinguished trust and confidence (e.g., Luhmann, 1988, 2018; Seligman, 1998, 2021). First, individuals form *trust* based on a variety of information on cognition, emotion, and motivation, while *confidence* is based merely on cognitive information (Madsen & Gregor, 2000; Rempel et al., 1985; Shaw, 1997). Empirical studies have identified that *trust* has more diverse antecedents, including social relations, morality, benevolence, integrity, fairness, and ingroup membership, than *confidence*, which is mostly based on what happened in the past (Petrušic & Baranski, 2003). Second, as explained in the literature review, the context in which *trust* is built entails risk, vulnerability, and uncertainty, while *confidence* does not (Luhmann, 1988; Mayer et al., 1995).

Based on the distinctions made by other scholars, this study focuses on political *trust* than political *confidence*. Many previous studies showed that politics and political decisions are not limited to the realm of cognition (e.g., Binning et al., 2010; Iyengar et al., 2019; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Ware, 2011). Furthermore, putting political trust in institutions and individuals is known to influence one's voting behavior, policy preferences, and other risk-entailed political behaviors. Based on the information used to make political decisions and contextual factors, *trust* better represents the concept being investigated in this study.

All public survey questions with the term *trust* asked from 1944 to 2018 and archived at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research have been collected to assess the various ways political trust has been measured in prior research. In total, 7,642 questions that include the word *trust* within the question were collected.

The questions were first classified based on similar wording and phrasing through natural language processing techniques. I calculated similarity ratios between every pair of two different questions in the question set. Question pairs with similarity ratios above a certain cutoff point were classified together to be considered as a similar question type. In the classification process, setting

an appropriate cutoff point is crucial. When the cutoff point is too low, distinctive question types can be classified as the same question type. On the contrary, when the cutoff point is too high, questions that are similar enough to be categorized as the same type are likely to be classified into distinctive groups. For this study, I tested with cutoff points from 0.4 to 0.7 at intervals of 0.05 and determined 0.6 to be the most ideal point to use. The question pairs having a similarity ratio higher than or equal to 0.6 were classified together, while those pairs with a similarity ratio lower than 0.6 were not.

Once the questions were classified, questions that used the term *trust* with unrelated meanings or contexts from the political trust were removed. First, questions that used *trust* as completely different meanings, such as the economic term “a property interest held by one person for the benefit of another” or “a combination of firms or corporations formed by a legal agreement” were removed (Trust, n.d.). Some questions that used *trust* in an unrelated context, such as a part of the term “anti-trust law” asking people’s opinions on anti-trust laws, were to be removed as well. After removing these unrelated questions, there were a bit over 7,300 questions left that became the set of questions asking for the level of trust. Then, questions on other types of trust, such as social trust, trust in the media, and trust in information sources, were removed to create a set of questions specifically on the level of political trust. After these data cleaning processes, there were 5,169 questions specifically targeting political trust were left.

In my analysis of the previously asked political-trust-related questions, I focused on *question-wording*, *format*, and *the object of political trust*. More specifically, I explored what kind of wordings and phrases were used in the questions to measure political trust and if there exist any frequently used question wordings or phrases. I also cumulated the complete list of the objects of political trust that have appeared on previous surveys on political trust to examine how previous surveys have conceptualized political trust. Furthermore, I compared the aforementioned elements of survey questions to investigate if any changes in questions have occurred over time, or if any particular questions were asked to reflect the times.

### **Analyses of Existing Political Trust Questions**

As noted above, in public surveys conducted from 1944 to 2018 and archived at the Roper Center, there are 7,642 questions including the word “trust.” After removing the questions that used “trust” in a way not relevant to my research, there were 7,269 questions left. The remaining rele-

vant questions could be largely categorized into six types of trust—political trust, social trust, trust in societal institutions, trust in media, trust in other countries, and others (e.g., trust in trust restoration). Specifically, of the 7,269 questions, 5,169 (71.11%) were related to political trust, followed by 749 (10.3%) social trust questions, 594 (8.17%) trust in societal institutions (e.g., local police, fire department), and 516 (7.1%) trust in media-related questions. As this chapter of the dissertation specifically focuses on how political trust has been measured in public surveys, the remaining interpretation of the data focuses on the 5,169 questions on political trust.

### ***Framing of Questions***

In this section, I focus on the framing of questions regardless of the specific object of political trust. For example, I grouped questions “would you say you basically trust the federal government in Washington or not?” and “would you say you trust Bill Clinton on a personal level or not” together as they are both framed to ask about the trust in one trustee. However, a question such as “compared to 10 years ago, do you feel you can trust most men in public office more, less, or about the same as you did then?” is distinguished from the former as the question is framed to compare the object of trust’s present with the past. I created 13 distinct framing groups, shown in Table 3.1 below. Note that these framings are not mutually exclusive, meaning that more than one framing may be used together in one question.

I set the most *basic* framing of a question to be those that simply ask the level of political trust in an individual or institution. This type of question does not include any specifying conditions—it does not ask for the trust under a specific political or social event nor compare two or more objects of trust in one question. The second framing type, which is also one of the most frequently used, asks respondents to *select the most trusted individual or institution* among two or more individuals or institutions provided in the question. This type of question appears most frequently during election periods, comparing presidential candidates among and between parties.

The third question format is *comparisons to the past*. For example, some questions ask if one’s trust in a politician or political institution has changed over a specific period of time. Or some questions more specifically compare the past and present level of trust in its object; such as “how about today, would you say that you trust our leaders in Washington more than you trusted the leaders during the Vietnam War, less that you trust them then, or about the same amount?”

Due to the time difference between the past and the present, questions of this framing often use the objects of trust as a group of people (e.g., “leaders in Washington,” “most men in public office”) or government in general rather than specifying a particular politician.

The fourth question format is *issue-specific* framing that asks the level of trust in an individual’s or institution’s handling or dealing with a particular political or social issue. Public surveys that used issue-specific framing generally, if not all, asked on a predetermined set of issues. There are certain recurring issues, such as dealing with gun control, unemployment, and environmental problems. Yet, some issues only appear in particular periods to reflect the political and social circumstances of the time. For example, during the Carter administration, there were questions asking how much trust has been restored by the Carter administration reflecting his promise to restore trust in government. During the Bush administration, many questions asked how much trust one has in the Bush administration’s handling of the Iraq war.

Similar to *comparison to the past* framing, the fifth type of question asks if one’s trust has *changed over time or due to a specific political or social event*. This framing type is also sensitive to the circumstances of the time. For example, trust in the Nixon administration was often measured regarding the Watergate scandal. In the case of Bill Clinton, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal has been “the affair” that led many public surveys to specifically ask if one’s level of trust held in Clinton changed after the scandal or not.

The sixth type of format uses *hypothetical conditions*, asking about trust in a certain individual or institution as well. Questions of this type provide a specific event in a hypothetical manner. Frequently hypothesized situations include the following: a certain candidate being elected in an upcoming election, a change in or an implementation of a policy (e.g., “if the tax had to be raised,” “if the nation’s health care system is reformed”), and the repetition of a similar crisis that had happened in the past (e.g., “the next time the United States is faced with a foreign crisis such as Iraq”). The *hypothetical condition* framing uses both *basic* framing and *comparison* framing to specify the trustee.

While the *hypothetical condition* framing makes respondents hypothesize something about political or social circumstances, the seventh type of format—“*regardless of*” framing—asks respondents to hypothesize about the respondents themselves. In other words, questions using “*regard-*



*less of* framing measure the level of trust in the trustee when a respondent takes a more objective approach by disregarding one's own voting intention or political preference. Questions often use phrases like "regardless how you usually vote" or "regardless of how you intend to vote" to set up the condition. This type of question often appears during election periods, attempting to measure the level of trust in the candidate excluding as much partisanship of the respondents as possible

Despite some differences in framing, the question framings explained thus far directly ask the level of trust in the object. Another group of question framings measures the level of political trust with *lead-ins*; questions ask one's level of trust after providing additional information about the trustee in question.

One type of lead-in framing *provides information in an informative way*. Questions of this type explain a certain political term or process (e.g., "the national debt is the total amount of money the United States government owes to its bondholders and some programs such as social security," "there is a health care legislation being considered by Congress commonly known as a "patient's bill of rights") or provide specific statements made by a candidate or a party (e.g., "Republicans say that Democrats don't understand that we live in a dangerous post-9/11—September 11, 2001, the date of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—world. Democrats care more about the rights of terrorist suspects than protecting Americans. They are weak and unwilling to use force. Iraq is the front line in the war on terror and we must not cut and run or we will only strengthen al Qaeda and Islamic extremists. President George W. Bush has an offensive strategy to take the fight to the terrorists and it has prevented attacks since 9/11 and made us safer") before asking one's level of political trust in the trustee.

The second type of lead-in framing measures political trust by *providing a definitive statement* and then asking the level of agreement with the statement. The given statement takes various forms; some statements follow *basic* framing, while other statements use *issue-specific* framing. Another variable observed in this framing is that a statement is presented with positive trust (e.g., "George Bush is someone you can trust"), while some others are presented in a form of mistrust (e.g., "I just don't trust Ronald Reagan").

Lastly, some questions specifically mention that the given statement is *what other people think about the trustee* or *other people's reasons for trust* in the trustee. For example, a question

begins with “people have different reasons for not trusting the government. I’m going to read you a list of some of those reasons. Please tell me if each one is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all why you often/sometimes don’t trust the federal government.”

There are also other less frequently used question framings, such as questions measuring *mistrust* rather than directly asking for the level of trust, questions asking for a *reason for trust*, and questions asking people to *guess the level of trust in someone as if they were someone else* (further explanations of each framing and specific examples are provided in Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Framings of Political Trust-Related Questions from Traditional Surveys

Framing Type	Explanation	Examples
Basic	Asks the level of trust in A without specifying political issues or comparing with trust in other individuals or institutions	<p>Do you think Bill Clinton is a leader you can trust?</p> <p>Now I would like you to think about the level of trust that you have in President Bill Clinton. On a scale from one to ten, where one is no trust and ten is complete trust, how would you rate the level of trust that you have in Bill Clinton as President?</p> <p>Generally speaking, how often do you think you can trust the government to do what’s right? Can you trust the government most of the time? Only some of the time? Hardly ever? Or never?</p>
Comparison	Compares two or more political individuals and/or institutions to select the one the respondent trusts more	Which one of them would you trust the most to do the right thing, (Jimmy) Carter or (Ronald) Reagan?
Comparison to the past	Compares the level of trust in an individual/institution between the present and the past	How about today, would you say that you trust our leaders in Washington more than you trusted the leaders during the Vietnam war, less that you trusted them then, or about the same amount?
Issue-specific	Provides a specific issue—mostly political or societal issues—and measures trust in an individual or institution handling the issue	<p>Do you or do you not trust Barack Obama to protect America’s national security?</p> <p>Overall, do you feel that you can or cannot trust the Bush administration to honestly and accurately report intelligence about possible threats from other countries?</p>

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Table 3.1 – *Continued from previous page*

Framing Type	Explanation	Examples
Change in trust over time/due to an affair	Measures the change in the level of trust in an individual/institution, over time or due to a significant event	<p>As a result of the Monica Lewinsky matter, would you say that Bill Clinton betrayed the public’s trust, or would you not say that?</p> <p>Over the past 12 months, do you think you have become more likely or less likely to...trust your country’s leaders to make the right decisions?</p>
Hypothetical condition	Provides hypothetical conditions (“what if”) before asking trust in an individual/institution	<p>If a situation arose that required the president to make a decision about sending U.S. (United States) troops to war, who would you trust more to make that decision—John Kerry or George W. Bush?</p> <p>If elected, would you trust Bob Dole to keep the promises he made when he announced his economic plan today/on Monday, or would you not trust him to keep these promises?</p> <p>The next time the United States is faced with a foreign crisis such as Iraq, which (2004 presidential election) candidate would you trust to do a better job handling the situation—George W. Bush or Howard Dean?</p>
“Regardless of” Statement	Explicitly states the level of trust regardless of one’s voting intention or political preference	<p>Regardless of how you intend to vote in 2012, which (Republican presidential) candidate do you trust most to deal with the economy and unemployment—Michele Bachmann, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Ron Paul, Rick Perry, Mitt Romney, or Rick Santorum?</p> <p>Most people see one candidate as better able to handle certain problems than another candidate can. Now regardless of which man you happen to prefer (for President in 1976)—Ford or Reagan—please tell me which one, you, yourself, feel can do a better job of handling each of the following problems. Restoring trust in government.</p> <p>Regardless of how you usually vote, who do you trust more to protect the Social Security system and retirement benefits—the Republicans or the Democrats?</p>

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Table 3.1 – Continued from previous page

Framing Type	Explanation	Examples
Provision of information	Provides a piece of information—often in a general informative statement, a statement by someone, or a reaffirmation of one’s knowledge—before asking the level of political trust in an individual or institution	<p>The national debt is the total amount of money the US (United States) government owes to its bondholders and to some programs, such as Social Security. Who do you trust more to handle the national debt, (Barack) Obama or the Republicans in Congress?</p> <p>And now that you have heard a little about the (2000 presidential) candidates’ records on the environment, do you think that the record and statements of... Al Gore show him to be someone you would trust to protect the environment or someone you would distrust to protect the environment? (If trust/distrust, ask:) Would you say that you strongly trust/distrust him to protect the environment, or somewhat trust/distrust him to protect the environment?</p> <p>As you know, our federal government is made up of three branches: an Executive branch, headed by the President, a Judicial branch, headed by the US (United States) Supreme Court, and a Legislative branch, made up of the US Senate and House of Representatives. Let me ask you how much trust and confidence you have at this time in ... the Executive branch headed by the President ... a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?</p>
Agreement with the statement	Provides a statement on trust	<p>Does each of the following statements apply to Gary Hart? I trust his judgment on defense</p> <p>Which of these descriptions apply and which do not apply to George Bush? ... is someone you can trust</p> <p>To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? ... Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree ... Most of the time we can trust people in government to do what is right.</p>

*Continued on next page*

Table 3.1 – Continued from previous page

Framing Type	Explanation	Examples
Provision of other people’s idea, argument, reason for trust	Provides a statement on trust from other people	<p>(Now, I am going to read you a list of words and phrases which people use to describe political figures. For each word or phrase, please tell me whether it describes George (W.) Bush very well, well, not too well, or not well at all.) ... Can trust him to make the right decisions ... Does that phrase describe George Bush very well, well, not too well, or not well at all?</p> <p>People have different ideas about the government in Washington. These ideas don’t refer to Democrats or Republicans in particular, but just to the government in general. We want to see how you feel about these ideas. First, how much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? ... Just about always, most of the time, only some of the time, never</p> <p>People have different reasons for not trusting the government. I’m going to read you a list of some of those reasons. Please tell me if each one is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all why you often/sometimes don’t trust the federal government. How about ... the federal government’s taxes are too high?</p>
Mistrust	Uses “mistrust” to ask instead of “trust”	Are there any (2012) Republican candidates (for president) who you do not trust to handle America’s foreign policy?
Asking for a reason for trust	Directly asks the reason for trust rather than measuring the level of trust	(If trust the government in Washington just about always/most of the time/only some of the time/none of the time)–what is the main reason you often/sometimes don’t trust the federal government?
Guessing A’s Trust in B	Asks to guess a particular individual/institution’s level of trust in another individual/institution	In negotiating with each other to solve the country’s problems, do you think ... President (Bill) Clinton can trust the Republicans in Congress?

### ***The Object of Political Trust***

As politics, or the political sphere, is a complex concept composed of numerous institutional structures and persons holding various positions, survey questions on political trust often select a specific object of the trust rather than asking about general trust in politics. Doing so is useful in that it allows for a better understanding of how the level of trust in specific elements of politics differs. It also offers insights into how the general public formulates the concept of politics and political trust in their mind. Public surveys have used a wide range of political entities that are expected to be the crucial elements of the larger concept. Some questions include only a single trustee, while some others include two or more to make comparisons.

Consistent with the notion of diffuse political trust, some objects of political trust are asked at the institutional or systematic level. Table 3.2 includes the trustees that frequently appear in questions. Different levels of government—the federal government, state government, and local government—are all asked independently, as are different branches of government—legislative, judicial, and executive branches. More specific references to each branch also exist. For example, to refer to the federal legislative branch, questions often use the term “the U.S. Congress.” There are also questions specifically asking for the level of trust in a specific party in Congress or even referring to the “elected leaders in the Democratic/Republican party.” For the judicial branch, questions tend to differentiate trust in the Supreme Court, or “courts” and “the court system” more generally. Regarding the executive branch, questions use “White House” to refer to it. There are also questions using the terms “federal government” and “Government in Washington” to directly refer to the policy-decisions-making branches. Other frequently appearing objects of the trust are the Republican and the Democratic Parties. Some objects are related to elections—the election process, election campaigns, codes of campaign conduct, election polls, etc. Trust in specific political processes (e.g., congressional investigation or the U.S. Census) are also asked about in some surveys. Still, broad terms such as “the government” are used as the object of political trust as well.

Some objects in questions are targeted to examine specific political trust, focusing on individual officeholders or candidates running for these offices. These questions typically include the names of the candidates or elected officials as the objects of the trust, though the terms “elected (public) officials,” “people in power,” “elected men and women in political life in this country,” or “members in Congress” are also used to refer to a group of officeholders. Such questions, however,

are unclear as to whether they are tapping specific or diffuse political trust.

Table 3.2: Objects of Political Trust (Single Entity)

<b>Level</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Specific Terms Used</b>
Institutions-/ System-level	Levels of government	Federal government State government Local government
	Branches of government	Legislative branch Judicial branch Executive branch
	Legislative branch	US Congress
	Judicial branch	Supreme Court Court Court system
	Executive branch	Federal government Government in Washington White House
	Parties	The Democratic party The Republican party
	Election-related	Election Election campaign Code of campaign conduct Public opinion polls
	Political procedural/ systematic objects	Congressional investigation “American system” Census
	“The government”	
Individuals	Elected officials (in general)	“People in power” “Elected public officials” “Men and women in political life of this country”
	Candidates for different positions	President Republican/Democratic presidential candidate (within party)
	“Politicians”	
	Members in Congress	
Others	“Information source”	

Some questions are meant to tap specific trust comparing two or more trustees, usually drawn from the examples provided above. Table 3.3 provides sets of political entities often used for comparison. One of the most frequently appearing objects for comparison is the sitting President. Political trust in the President is often compared with trust in Congress, Republicans in Congress, Democrats in Congress, the Senate, specific politicians, and local government. These comparisons follow the general rule that each of the entities listed is in a “checks and balances” relationship with the President, the chief of the executive branch. During the election season, many surveys tend to compare the level of trust in two or more candidates running for the same office, most often between the candidates running for the Presidency. Trust in candidates is also often compared with trust in media. Those questions usually ask respondents to select the entity that the respondent trusts to tell the truth about important issues. Comparison between the two parties (e.g., party leaders of each party, officeholders of each party in Congress) is another frequently appearing question in surveys. Trust in different levels of government (e.g., federal/state/local government) is often compared as well.

Table 3.3: Objects of Political Trust (Comparing Multiple Entities)

<b>Object 1</b>	<b>Object 2</b>
President	Congress Democrats/Republicans in Congress The Senate Specific politician Local government
(President Name) Administration	(Opposite party) in Congress
Candidate	Candidate Media
Government branch	Government branch Private sector
One level of government	Another level of government
Party leader	Opposite party leader
Democrats in Congress	Republicans in Congress



**Question Phrasing and Response Options in Trust Questions**

Lastly, this section explores phrasing and response options in measuring political trust.

There are four most frequently used forms in political trust questions: 1) *do you* trust (or not), 2) *how much* do you trust, 3) *how often* do you trust, and 4) *whom* do you trust *more*. Table 3.4 is the list of phrases and scales used frequently in survey questionnaires:

Table 3.4: Phrases and Scales Used in Traditional Survey Questions

Phrase	Similar Formats	Answer Choices
"Do you trust"	"Do you feel you can trust" "Do you have a great deal of trust" "Do you think ... is a ... you can trust" "Does each of the following statements apply to ... [trust statement]" "Do you think ... can trust ..." "Do you have trust and confidence" "Would you say you can trust"	Yes No
"How much do you trust"	"How much trust do you put" "How much do you think you can trust" "How much do you tend to trust" "How much if at all do you trust" "How much trust do you have" "How much trust would you put" "How much trust do you think other people" "How much would you say you trust" "How much would you be inclined to trust" "How much would you trust" "How much do you trust or distrust" "How much trust and confidence do you have"	A great deal A fair amount / Some / Quite a lot Not very much / Only a little / Some None at all 0 (absolutely no trust) to 7 (complete trust) 0 (absolutely no trust) to 10 (total trust) 0 (completely distrust) to 10 (completely trust)

*Continued on next page*

Table 3.4 – *Continued from previous page*

Phrase	Similar Formats	Answer Choices
“To what extent you trust”	“To what extent do you agree with the following statement: [trust statement]”	A great deal Somewhat Not too much Not at all
“How often do you trust”	“How often do you think you can trust” “How often can you trust”	Most of the time Only some of the time Hardly ever Never
“How much of time do you trust”	“How much of time do you think you can trust” “How much time you can trust” “How much time do you feel you can trust”	Always / Almost all of the time / Just about always Most of the time Only some of the time Never / Almost none of the time / None of the time
“Who/which do you trust more”		
“Who do you not trust”		
“Would you (generally) trust”		
“... make you trust more or less”		
“Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: [trust statement]”		
“Do you have ... who you can trust”		
“How much of the following factor affect your trust in ...”		
“Why do you have trust and confidence”		

The first group uses a phrase such as “do you trust (or not)” to measure trust, with a simple binary response option. The variation in the answer choices of this phrase group lies in whether the question expresses the opposite of *trust* as *no trust* or *distrust*. The second type of phrasing and response option attempts to measure the degree of trust by using phrases such as “how much” or “to what extent you trust,” and providing response option scales that range from *absolutely no trust/none at all* to *total trust/a great deal*. The third group approaches the measurement to include a temporal or frequency perspective—“how often do you trust” or “how much of the time do you trust.” These questions typically provide answer choices ranging from *always/almost of the time* to *never/almost none of the time*. Finally, there are comparative question phrases in which respondents are asked to select the person or the institution they trust or trust more, or that ask about agreement or disagreement with a given trust-related statement. Questions asking for agreement/disagreement with the statement mostly provide a binary response option—agree or disagree.

### **3.2 Study 1b. Creation and Execution of the New Political Trust Measurement Survey (NPTMS)**

In Study 1b, I attempt to create a new survey questionnaire on political trust that aims to compare the performance of different questions, assess their reliability and validity, and ultimately develop a measure or measures to be used in Study 3, based on the analyses of the previously asked political trust-related questions and theories on political trust.

In this dissertation, I conceptualize political trust as the level of absolute trust—not in a form of comparative trust (e.g., comparison between two political entities, comparison to the past)—in the fundamental institutions and systems of the democratic government and those institutions’ officeholders at times. Many previous studies on the formation of political trust focused on whether or not specific characteristics of the trustee or other circumstantial conditions influence the level of political trust, either positively or negatively. However, Study 1b focuses more on how *the public conceptualizes* political trust themselves: that is, how people formulate and compartmentalize different types of political trust. Of particular interest is to determine if, for example, the public perceives trust in specific political entities, such as incumbents, differently from trust in more general political institutions.

## Construction of the NPTMS

My NPTMS involves four commonly studied types of political trust: 1) diffuse political trust, 2) specific political trust, 3) issue-specific diffuse political trust, and 4) issue-specific specific political trust. In terms of question format, I chose the *basic framing*<sup>2</sup> which simply asks the level of political trust in an individual or institution for an object of political trust. The questions all used one of the most common phrases, “how much trust do you have in [object of trust].” Response options were also consistent across questions, using a 7-point scale response option that ranges from *no trust at all* to *complete trust*. I used *no trust at all* instead of *complete distrust* as there is still an ongoing debate on whether trust and distrust are true opposites of each other (McKnight & Chervany, 2001).

One important variance in existing measures of political trust is the object of trust. With this in mind, I included questions that measured trust in the most commonly studied national political institutions/systems (diffuse trust) and actors (specific trust). The following was included for diffuse political trust: The Presidency, the Congress, the Supreme Court, the overall democratic system, and the overall national election process of the United States. For *specific* political trust, objects of trust were in forms that corresponded to the objects asked in the measurement of *diffuse* political trust: President Donald Trump, current congressmen/congresswomen, current members of the Supreme Court, and the outcomes of the 2018 national elections of the United States. To create a clear distinction between the two types of political trust, the questionnaire emphasized that the questions on *diffuse* political trust are asking about the level of trust one has in the political institutions of the United States; when answering the questions, the participants were expected to think of *the systems and institutions in general* instead of specific persons currently holding positions. On the other hand, before asking questions related to *specific* political trust, I indicated that the following questions ask the level of trust one has in *the specific person(s) serving political roles* in the United States. Diffuse and specific trusts are about institutions and officeholders in general, not about them handling a particular political/social issue.

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<sup>2</sup>I chose *basic framing* over other formats for the following reasons: While *comparative trust questions* can tell if one trustee is more trusted than the other, my interest is in absolute levels of trust. *Lead-in framing* might have an advantage in clarifying the meaning of the political term or recalling the political event or trustee so as to reduce threats to the measurement’s construct validity. However, the statements used in *lead-in framing* can create unintended biases in respondents’ responses. Especially, if the question deals with an unfamiliar trustee and/or the trustee dealing with an issue that the respondent has never contemplated, the statement given in the question may generate systematic errors. Furthermore, the problem can worsen when the statement on what the general public or a majority of people think about the person/institution and/or the event is provided as a part of the question.

In regards to *issue-specific* political trust (i.e., belief that the institution or person in question could be trusted to handle a particular issue effectively), my analysis of Study 1a found that the issues in previous surveys were predetermined by the researcher—ranging from long-standing issues (e.g., nation’s economy, foreign affairs) to time-sensitive issues (e.g., Iraq war, Watergate). While useful, this approach may mean that respondents vary greatly in the extent to which they care about or have even thought about the issue in question. This can create errors caused by spillover effects; respondents may report diffuse or specific political trust rather than specifically reporting their level of trust in the trustee’s handling of the specific issue. For this reason, participants in my survey were first asked to name the three most important problems the United States is facing today. Then, I asked the trust in the same set of political entities asked in *diffuse* and *specific* political trusts handling of each of those three issues. These questions were worded as the following: “In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered [participant’s answer]. How much trust do you have in [object of trust] to handle this issue?” I expect issue-specific trust to be more relevant if the issues are the ones of the respondent’s interest.

In addition to the 36 political trust questions described above, I included demographic questions (e.g., gender, race, level of education, party affiliation, political ideology, and income), as well as questions measuring other attitudes and behaviors that prior research suggested having some effect on the formation of political trust (e.g., social trust, political efficacy, media usage, and political participation). The full set of Study 1b questions are provided in Appendix A.

## **Results**

To implement my survey, I recruited 496 U.S. adult respondents through Amazon Mechanical Turk in April 2019 during the Trump administration with the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. In running exploratory factor analysis, it is known that the larger the sample size, the less likelihood of errors of inference. Yet, generally, a 10:1 survey subject to item ratio is considered the rule of thumb in determining the sample size (Costello & Osborne, 2005). This study, using 36 items, had a ratio of 13.78:1, providing good grounds for correct factor structure.

### ***Survey sample and limitations***

The use of Mechanical Turk has some obvious limitations. While I filtered potential respondents to be American citizens aged over 18, this is not a random sample making it difficult to generalize the results to the U.S. adult population. Nonetheless, variance is arguably more important than randomness when assessing various measures of trust and their relationship to demographic, attitudinal, or behavioral characteristics.

Table 3.5 provides an overview of the sample. 48.2% of respondents were male and 51.3% were female, a similar gender ratio to the U.S. population. 73.7% of the respondents were white, followed by 9.5% African American, 6.8% Asian, 4.6% Hispanic or Latino, and 5.4% of mixed race, again largely in line with the U.S. population, with the important exception of the Hispanic/Latino population. As with most Mechanical Turk samples, the sample was generally more educated than the average U.S. population: 18.1% had a graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD), 43.4% of the respondents had completed an associate's or bachelor's degree, 21.2% had some college education with no degree, and 10.4% had only a high school degree.

Regarding party affiliation, 39.4% of the respondents were affiliated with the Democratic party (13.5% strong Democrat; 25.9% Democrat), 20.6% of them affiliated with the Republican party (3.8% strong Republican; 16.8% Republican), and the remaining 40.0% of the respondents identified themselves as Independents (10.8% Independent but lean Democrat; 18.6% Independent; 10.6% Independent but lean Republican). Lastly, a similar composition was observed for political ideology—39.4% liberals, 20.8% conservatives, and 39.8% moderates. People who are affiliated with Democrats or who identify as liberals were slightly overrepresented when compared to the general U.S. population but not to a concerning level.

While the respondents were not randomly selected from the U.S. population, the variance across the respondent group's key characteristics is sufficient to serve the purpose of comparing political trust measures and developing a measure of political trust.

Table 3.5: Demographic Summary of the First Round NPTMS Participants (n=452)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	218	48.2%
Female	232	51.3%
Nonbinary/Others	2	0.4%
White	333	73.7%
Black/African American	43	9.5%
Asian	31	6.9%
Hispanic/Latino	21	4.7%
Mixed Race/Others	24	5.3%
High school degree or less	50	11.1%
Some college education with no degree	96	21.2%
Completed an associate's or bachelor's degree	196	43.4%
Some graduate education with no degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	27	6.0%
Have a graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	82	18.1%
Others	1	0.2%
Strong Democrat	61	13.5%
Democrat	117	25.9%
Independent but Lean Democrat	49	10.8%
Independent	84	18.6%
Independent but Lean Republican	48	10.6%
Republican	76	16.8%
Strong Republican	17	3.8%
Very Liberal	56	12.4%
Liberal	122	27.0%
Moderate but Lean Liberal	59	13.1%
Moderate	79	17.5%
Moderate but Lean Conservative	42	9.3%
Conservative	69	15.3%
Very Conservative	25	5.5%

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

Before running an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to examine the latent structure of a set of multiple factors and the relationship the factors have with one another, I conducted analyses of descriptive statistics to understand how different types of trust vary quantitatively and to check the face validity of the NPTMS. Table 3.6 summarizes the descriptive statistics of each type of trust for the whole survey sample and the three subgroups by political party affiliation—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

The average levels of all 36 items of trust measured in the NPTMS were 3.22, 2.99, 3.83, and 2.79 for the whole sample, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, respectively. Republicans held the highest level of political trust, while Independents recorded the lowest level.

Out of all objects of trust, trust in the overall democratic system (3.48) was the object that Democrats held the highest trust in, while both the Presidency in general (2.42) and President Donald Trump specifically (1.61) were objects that they held the lowest trust in. Similarly, the object of trust that Independents expressed the lowest level of trust in was Trump (2.34). In contrast, the objects of trust that Republicans held the highest trust in were Trump (4.69) and the Presidency (4.59).

Across the three political subgroups, the Supreme Court is one of the most trusted political branches—the most trusted institution for both Democrats (3.36) and Independents (3.12), the third most trusted for Republicans (4.05) following their trust in President Donald Trump and the Presidency.

The first trend found from this analysis is that respondents demonstrated different levels of trust in political entities depending on their party identification: both Democrats and Independents showed lower levels of trust than Republicans in all types of political trust measured. Among the different trusts in nine political entities, the biggest difference was observed from their trust in President Trump—both specific trust and issue-specific trust in him. The average of Democrats' trust in Trump was 1.61 points across the specific and issue-specific trust in him, while the average of the Republicans' trust was 4.69 points—recording the difference in the level of trust between the two groups to be 3.09 points. Similarly, Democrats and Republicans showed a large difference in the level of general trust in the Presidency as well, recording a 2.17 points difference—the average



level of trust in the Presidency by Democrats was 2.42, while that by Republicans was 4.59.

The second trend is that both the whole sample and all subgroups demonstrated a lower level of trust for all objects when asked to think of the level of trust in political entities to handle specific issues of their interest in comparison to general or specific trust in the political entities correspondingly.

Table 3.6: Summary of the First Round Mean Score Analysis

<b>Object of Trust</b>	<b>Whole Pop</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )	3.65 (1.87)	2.99 (1.68)	4.96 (1.56)	3.26 (1.72)
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	2.94 (1.98)	2.11 (1.45)	4.56 (1.94)	2.49 (1.66)
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	2.99 (1.93)	2.26 (1.57)	4.44 (1.83)	2.54 (1.61)
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	3.00 (1.93)	2.32 (1.62)	4.39 (1.87)	2.52 (1.60)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.15 (1.95)</b>	<b>2.42 (1.61)</b>	<b>4.59 (1.82)</b>	<b>2.70 (1.67)</b>
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )	2.77 (2.10)	1.48 (1.16)	5.00 (1.63)	2.55 (1.65)
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )	2.65 (2.12)	1.57 (1.25)	4.63 (2.08)	2.25 (1.65)
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )	2.70 (2.07)	1.69 (1.36)	4.57 (1.99)	2.30 (1.62)
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )	2.69 (2.06)	1.69 (1.34)	4.57 (1.98)	2.26 (1.61)
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.71 (2.08)</b>	<b>1.61 (1.28)</b>	<b>4.69 (1.93)</b>	<b>2.34 (1.63)</b>
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	3.53 (1.42)	3.54 (1.22)	3.74 (1.57)	3.17 (1.58)
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	2.84 (1.51)	3.02 (1.45)	2.82 (1.64)	2.40 (1.33)
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	2.94 (1.53)	3.03 (1.43)	3.01 (1.66)	2.56 (1.51)
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	2.90 (1.55)	3.03 (1.47)	2.86 (1.65)	2.65 (1.59)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.05 (1.53)</b>	<b>3.15 (1.41)</b>	<b>3.11 (1.67)</b>	<b>2.70 (1.53)</b>
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	3.48 (1.36)	3.67 (1.18)	3.42 (1.46)	3.07 (1.53)
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	2.83 (1.45)	3.03 (1.38)	2.72 (1.56)	2.46 (1.36)
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	2.87 (1.52)	3.04 (1.46)	2.82 (1.64)	2.48 (1.38)
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	2.93 (1.58)	3.15 (1.52)	2.77 (1.67)	2.61 (1.52)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.03 (1.50)</b>	<b>3.22 (1.41)</b>	<b>2.93 (1.61)</b>	<b>2.66 (1.46)</b>
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )	4.49 (1.51)	4.26 (1.44)	5.03 (1.45)	4.20 (1.58)
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )	3.26 (1.63)	3.12 (1.54)	3.80 (1.70)	2.70 (1.49)
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )	3.18 (1.66)	3.04 (1.60)	3.64 (1.72)	2.80 (1.57)
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )	3.18 (1.73)	3.00 (1.62)	3.72 (1.76)	2.77 (1.76)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.53 (1.72)</b>	<b>3.36 (1.64)</b>	<b>4.05 (1.75)</b>	<b>3.12 (1.71)</b>

Continued on next page

Table 3.6 – Continued from previous page

<b>Object of Trust</b>	<b>Whole Pop</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>S</b> )	4.19 (1.51)	3.80 (1.43)	4.94 (1.32)	4.01 (1.56)
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>I1</b> )	3.18 (1.66)	2.97 (1.56)	3.79 (1.71)	2.73 (1.56)
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>I2</b> )	3.10 (1.67)	2.93 (1.56)	3.70 (1.81)	2.57 (1.42)
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>I3</b> )	3.09 (1.73)	2.93 (1.64)	3.64 (1.81)	2.61 (1.62)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.40 (1.71)</b>	<b>3.16 (1.59)</b>	<b>4.02 (1.75)</b>	<b>2.98 (1.65)</b>
Election ( <b>G</b> )	3.93 (1.71)	3.64 (1.57)	4.63 (1.60)	3.51 (1.92)
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	3.20 (1.59)	3.19 (1.53)	3.55 (1.73)	2.68 (1.38)
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	3.30 (1.64)	3.26 (1.61)	3.66 (1.74)	2.79 (1.38)
Election ( <b>I3</b> )	3.21 (1.66)	3.23 (1.64)	3.48 (1.65)	2.74 (1.63)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.41 (1.68)</b>	<b>3.33 (1.59)</b>	<b>3.83 (1.74)</b>	<b>2.93 (1.62)</b>
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>S</b> )	4.15 (1.75)	3.92 (1.73)	4.72 (1.69)	3.81 (1.69)
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	2.89 (1.60)	2.91 (1.54)	3.23 (1.80)	2.27 (1.18)
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	2.92 (1.60)	3.01 (1.58)	3.11 (1.70)	2.35 (1.33)
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	2.95 (1.64)	2.99 (1.55)	3.19 (1.80)	2.42 (1.46)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.23 (1.73)</b>	<b>3.21 (1.65)</b>	<b>3.57 (1.87)</b>	<b>2.71 (1.56)</b>
Democratic System ( <b>G</b> )	4.10 (1.55)	4.00 (1.42)	4.48 (1.59)	3.73 (1.67)
Democratic System ( <b>I1</b> )	3.25 (1.54)	3.30 (1.54)	3.43 (1.59)	2.82 (1.35)
Democratic System ( <b>I2</b> )	3.29 (1.59)	3.32 (1.60)	3.52 (1.60)	2.83 (1.44)
Democratic System ( <b>I3</b> )	3.24 (1.58)	3.31 (1.59)	3.46 (1.57)	2.67 (1.47)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.47 (1.60)</b>	<b>3.48 (1.57)</b>	<b>3.73 (1.64)</b>	<b>3.01 (1.54)</b>
<b>Total Average of 36 Trust Items</b>	<b>3.22 (1.75)</b>	<b>2.99 (1.64)</b>	<b>3.83 (1.84)</b>	<b>2.79 (1.61)</b>

**Note a:** **G** refers to *diffuse* political trust. **S** refers to *specific* political trust. **I1**, **I2**, and **I3** each refers to *issue-specific* political trust—issues being the three most important problems the United States is facing today by each participant.

**Note b:** All results are provided in the form of *Mean (Standard Deviation)*.

### **Exploratory Factor Analysis with 36 Questions**

In order to better understand what, if any, underlying structure exists in the public's levels of political trust, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). As EFA examines the latent structure of a set of multiple factors and the relationship the factors have with one another, this method suitably explores how people formulate the concept of political trust, especially the compartmentalization of it. In this study, political trust is the latent variable, and each factor comprises

multiple questions on different political trusts. The question set with high internal validity and internal consistency will be extracted to create a new measurement of political trust, which will be used in Study 3. Running EFA with NPTMS allowed me to reduce the 36 different political trust items included in the survey to a more manageable and hopefully coherent set of factors.

EFA requires various choices to be made based on the characteristics and structure of the dataset. First, this study used principal factor methods for its factor extraction, as the assumption of multivariate normality of the dataset was “severely violated” (Fabrigar et al., 1999). Second, direct oblimin, one of the oblique methods, was used as the rotation method. It is hardly possible to expect different factors of political trust to be independent of each other, so it was important to use the oblique rotation method that does not lose information on correlations among factors. Lastly, this study considered the eigenvalues, the cumulative variance explained, and the scree plot to determine the number of factors to be retained. In finding the cleanest factor structure, items with less than 0.32 item communalities were removed, and factors with the sum of squared loadings less than 1 were dropped (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

The analysis of the descriptive statistics reconfirmed that there are some distinct differences in how much people trust political institutions and officeholders based on their party affiliation. Such difference proposes a possibility that trust and how it is structured in people’s minds might vary by the relationship between one’s party affiliation and who is in office. Therefore, I further examined how the formation and compartmentalization of political trust are interrelated to the respondent’s party identity by executing an EFA with three political identity subgroups.

All results of Bartlett’s test of sphericity for the total sample and the three subgroups based on political identity showed a statistically significant p-value, which meets the basic assumption of EFA indicating that coherent factors can be identified through the analysis as some correlations among the 36 items exist.

*i) The Whole Survey Sample:* Based on the criteria for the factor number determination, I decided to group the 36 items into four underlying factors (see Table 3.7). The first factor was generally composed of the issue-specific trusts in Congress and its current members, the national election process and the outcomes of the 2018 national elections, and the overall democratic system of the United States. This factor included the trusts in the aforementioned institutions/system and

its current officeholders handling the three most important issues the United States is facing today in each respondent's opinion, in addition to the specific trust in current Congress members.

The second factor consisted of trusts in the Presidency and President Donald Trump: general trust in the presidency, specific trust in President Trump, and issue-specific trust in both the presidency and Donald Trump were all grouped together. Specific trust in President Trump had the strongest influence on this factor, followed by the President's handling of the three important issues on people's minds.

The third factor was composed of issue-specific trust in the Supreme Court and the current members of the Supreme Court's handling of the most important issues mentioned by respondents. The influence of each measurement on the variable did not vary much, but issue-specific trusts in the current members of the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court handling the third important issue had the strongest influences on the factor.

Lastly, the fourth factor included diffuse and specific trusts in various institutions and officeholders: Congress, Supreme Court and its current members, the national election process and the outcome of the 2018 national election, and the overall democratic system of the United States.

Based on this analysis, there are four main findings to pay attention to. First, this result suggests that people generally do not distinguish diffuse trust from specific trust. Except for the pair of diffuse and specific trusts in Congress and its current members, in all three pairs—the Presidency and Trump, Supreme Court and the members of the current Supreme Court, elections and the outcome of the 2018 election—respondents did not distinguish trusts in the general institution/system from those in the specific person(s) serving in that institution/system. This suggests the need to further investigate how diffuse and specific political trust are related, such as if one influences the formation of another.

Secondly, people seem to organize their trust around institutions and the people serving the roles in the institutions, as opposed to differentiating diffuse trust from specific trust. The first three factors of the whole sample were trusts in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, respectively. This indicates that people organize trust by institution rather than by the traditionally perceived distinction of the general institution versus specific individuals in the office.

Thirdly, different political entities were not distinguished in some cases. Trust related to Congress, the election, and the democratic system were all included in one factor (Factor 1). This might have occurred as the election and democratic system share procedural aspects of politics, while the Presidency/President Trump, Congress/the current congressmen/women, and the Supreme Court/members of the current Supreme Court are branches of the government. Furthermore, the 2018 election was a midterm election that contested seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives. The nature of the election could be more related to the Congress and its current members.

Fourth, trusts in institutions/systems and specific officeholders handling the three important social issues were grouped together by three branches, and those issue-specific trusts appeared to have higher factor loadings than diffuse and specific trust.

Table 3.7: Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Whole Survey Sample)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	0.72			
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.72			
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	0.75			
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.55			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.73			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	<b>0.81</b>			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.77			
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.55			
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.59			
Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.61			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.64			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.75			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.75			
Democratic System ( <b>I2</b> )	0.55			
Democratic System ( <b>I3</b> )	0.47			
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )		0.64		
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )		0.82		
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )		0.79		
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )		0.74		
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )		<b>0.92</b>		
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )		0.88		
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )		0.87		
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )		0.85		
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )			0.70	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )			0.67	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )			0.79	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.68	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.67	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )			<b>0.84</b>	
Congress ( <b>G</b> )				0.53
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )				<b>0.63</b>
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )				0.54
Election ( <b>G</b> )				0.55
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>S</b> )				0.42
Democratic System ( <b>G</b> )				0.55
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.24	0.56	0.29
II	-	-	0.47	0.25
III	-	-	-	0.30

*ii) Republican Subgroup:* To investigate if the conceptualization of political trust differs by party affiliation, I conducted EFA with three subgroups. With the Republican subgroup, I factored the 36 trust items into four, based on the same set of criteria used for the whole sample (see Table 3.8).

The Republican subgroup's factor structure resembled that of the whole survey sample a lot. The first factor represented trust in the Congress and the election—this time including diffuse support in the Congress along with the specific support. Similar to the case of the whole survey sample, issue-specific trusts in the Congress and its members had the highest influence on the factor. The second factor generally represented trust in the Supreme Court and its members handling important social issues, and the third factor included all trusts—diffuse, specific, and issue-specific—related to the Presidency and President Donald Trump. Republicans factored specific trusts with issue-specific trusts in the corresponding trustee, leaving only diffuse trusts in the Supreme Court, the national election process, and the overall democratic system as the fourth factor.

Such factor structure confirmed the main findings from the whole-sample analyses. First, Republicans tended to organize their trust by institution. Second, issue-specific trust in the same political entity was not distinguished into separate factors. Lastly, diffuse and specific trust were generally factored together—no separation was found in two of the three branches of the government.

Table 3.8: Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Republicans)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	0.66			
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	<b>0.86</b>			
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.80			
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	0.79			
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.69			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.84			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.83			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.81			
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.51			
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.50			
Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.53			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.71			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.70			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.74			
Democratic System ( <b>I2</b> )	0.44			
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )		0.74		
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )		0.65		
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )		0.83		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )		0.55		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.71		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )		0.70		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )		<b>0.87</b>		
Democratic System ( <b>I1</b> )		0.48		
Democratic System ( <b>I3</b> )		0.58		
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )			0.78	
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )			0.83	
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )			0.82	
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )			0.57	
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )			<b>0.92</b>	
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )			0.77	
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )			0.75	
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )			0.59	
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )				<b>0.62</b>
Election ( <b>G</b> )				0.44
Democratic System ( <b>G</b> )				0.54
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.49	0.22	0.20
II	-	-	0.47	0.13
III	-	-	-	0.15



*iii) Democrat & Independent Subgroups:* The factor structures of Democrat and Independent subgroups mostly resembled each other. For both subgroups, the 36 political-trust-items were grouped into four factors, and three of them were organized by trusts in each government branch (see Tables 3.9, 3.10).

The first factor was composed of issue-specific trust in the Congress and its members, the national election and the outcome of the 2018 election, and the overall democratic system. Distinctive from Democrats, Independents factored both diffuse and specific trust in the Congress and its current members together in the first factor, similar to the Republican subgroup. Both subgroups' second factor was the issue-specific trust in President Trump and the Presidency with specific trust in him. Unlike the Republican subgroup, both Democrats and Independents separated diffuse support in the Presidency (included in Factor 3) from specific trust in Trump and issue-specific trust in the Presidency and Trump's handling of the three most important issues facing America today (Factor 2). The third factor generally included diffuse and specific trust in various political institutions and their officeholders. Democrat subgroup factored diffuse and specific trust in Congress and its members, Supreme Court and its members, election process and results of the 2018 election, and the overall democratic system of the United States together along with diffuse trust in the Presidency. Similar to the Democrat subgroup, the Independent subgroup similarly included most of the diffuse and specific trust only excluding those in the Congress and its members, and diffuse trust in the Presidency. Finally, both subgroups formulated the last factor around how both the Supreme Court and its current members handle important social issues.

As mentioned earlier, the structures of these two political subgroups were highly similar to each other. Both Democrats and Independents not only distinguished their trust in the Presidency from trust in other president-related trust but also grouped most of the diffuse and specific trust in different political institutions and officeholders as a separate factor.

Table 3.9: Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Democrats)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	0.66			
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.62			
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	0.65			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.61			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.74			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.67			
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.72			
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.72			
Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.69			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.63			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	<b>0.75</b>			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.70			
Democratic System ( <b>I1</b> )	0.53			
Democratic System ( <b>I2</b> )	0.72			
Democratic System ( <b>I3</b> )	0.64			
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )		0.55		
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )		0.54		
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )		0.60		
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )		<b>0.84</b>		
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.84</b>		
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )		0.77		
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )		0.78		
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )			0.48	
Congress ( <b>G</b> )			0.56	
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )			0.52	
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )			<b>0.71</b>	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )			0.62	
Election ( <b>G</b> )			0.65	
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>S</b> )			0.54	
Democratic System ( <b>G</b> )			0.58	
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )				0.51
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )				0.57
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )				0.62
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )				0.53
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )				0.51
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )				<b>0.70</b>
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.42	0.45	0.48
II	-	-	0.25	0.28
III	-	-	-	0.34

Table 3.10: Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Independents)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	0.52		(0.58)	
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	0.48			
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.68			
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	<b>0.80</b>			
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.56		(0.56)	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.54			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.68			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.74			
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.33			
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.45			
Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.69			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.34			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.57			
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.79			
Democratic System ( <b>I1</b> )	0.43			
Democratic System ( <b>I2</b> )	0.48			
Democratic System ( <b>I3</b> )	0.65			
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )		0.75		
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )		0.66		
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )		0.62		
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )		0.77		
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.86</b>		
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )		0.76		
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )		0.78		
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )			0.68	
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )			<b>0.71</b>	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )			<b>0.71</b>	
Election ( <b>G</b> )			0.70	
Outcome of the 2018 Election ( <b>S</b> )			0.61	
Democratic System ( <b>G</b> )			0.69	
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )				0.73
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )				0.67
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )				0.74
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )				0.66
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )				<b>0.83</b>
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )				0.77
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.27	0.30	0.50
II	-	-	0.26	0.28
III	-	-	-	0.40

### ***Discussion: EFA with 36 Question Items***

Based on the EFA with 36 trust questions, some patterns across and within groups with different political identities were observed.

First, the traditional distinction between diffuse and specific political trust was not found. Participants tended to not distinguish between the Congress and the current members of the Congress, between the Supreme Court and the members of the current Supreme Court, nor between elections and the outcome of the 2018 election. However, trust in the Presidency and President Donald Trump exhibited a slightly different pattern based on one's party identification. Democrats and Independents distinguished trust in the Presidency from that in President Trump, while Republicans did not. This pattern may be attributed to one's party identification, but I hypothesize that this difference is due to the share of partisanship with the officeholder. Since President Trump represented the Republican Party at the time this survey was conducted, Democrats may have exhibited the lowest level of trust in him, while the level of trust in the Presidency may be higher. I suppose that the same pattern does not appear in the case of Congress and the Supreme Court, as those institutions are not represented by a single person, thus it is more difficult to determine clear copartisanship or outpartisanship of the institutions or people serving roles in those institutions. In the case of the Congress, the fact that the Democratic Party and Republican Party each played their role as the House majority and Senate majority, respectively, may have attributed to such a pattern as well. Whether the distinction made between trust in the Presidency and Donald Trump, among Democrats, can be attributed to the share of partisanship or to the party identity itself will be further tested and discussed in the next section on the second-round survey conducted after the 2020 Presidential Election.

Second, EFA found that people organized their trust by institutions and the people holding positions in the institutions, instead of the traditional distinction. The whole sample and all political subgroups formulated different trusts in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Trust in the overall national election process, the outcome of the 2018 election, and the democratic system of the United States were not factorized as independent factors but were rather included in the factors dealing with trust in congress or overall trust in political individuals and institutions. Trust in the general election process and its 2018 result were grouped with trust in Congress and its members. The 2018 U.S. election was the midterm election for the several seats of the Congress—both the Senate and the House—contextually having close connections with the trust in the Congress.

This suggests that the nature of the election may change its relationship with other trust items depending on the context. As trust in the election process and democratic system slightly complicate the factorization of political trust, it suggests that the formulation of political trust may look more interpretable if only trust in the three branches of government is included in the analysis.

Lastly, all issue-trust measures were organized by institutions as well—trusts in each political entity handling three different issues were grouped together without any exception. Furthermore, issue-specific trust appeared to have strong factor loadings in each factor across subgroups, indicating that they have a significant influence on each factor.

### ***Re-Run***

#### ***Analysis: Abridged Exploratory Factor Analysis with 24 Question Items***

EFA with all 36 trust questions demonstrated some important characteristics of how the public conceptualizes political trust. However, items on the election process and the results of the 2018 election, and the overall democratic system of the United States were factored with trust in the three branches of the government and each branch's officeholders rather than forming separate factors. Despite their importance in democracy in general, the election and overall democratic system carry more procedural and systematic meanings than the three branches. Such distinct characteristics can explain why the items related to election and the overall democratic system were rather included as a part of factors explaining trust in a specific branch.

Reflecting on such analyses with all 36 questions, I executed another round of EFA with 24 items including trust in only the three branches of the government and the people in them—the Presidency, Donald Trump, the Congress, current Congress members, Supreme Court, and the current Supreme Court members. The re-ran EFA models showed a much clear factorization result (see Tables 3.11, 3.12, 3.13, 3.14).

Similar to the EFA with 36 items, the abridged EFA confirmed that individuals formulate trust around institutions and the people in those institutions. Regarding the Presidency/President Trump, Republicans factored diffuse trust, specific trust, and issue-specific trusts in both the Presidency and Trump as a single factor. Democrats and Independents, however, separated the diffuse trust in the Presidency from other Presidency/President-related items. With regard to the Congress

and its current members, Republicans and Independents all grouped diffuse, specific, and issue-specific trusts related to the Congress and its current members as one factor. Similar to how Presidency/President items are grouped by Democrats, diffuse trust in the Congress was factored separately from other Congress/Congressmembers-related items. However, the Democrat subgroup's factor loading for the diffuse trust in the Congress suggests that the diffuse trust item has potential to be factorized with the rest of Congress/Congressmembers-related items. Lastly, Democrats and Independents distinguished diffuse and specific trusts in the Supreme Court and its current members from the related issue-specific trusts. However, Republicans did not distinguish any Supreme Court-related trust items.

This analysis re-confirmed that people organize political trust around institutions and the officeholders of the institutions rather than by the traditional diffuse-specific divide. Furthermore, issue-specific trust items had high factor loadings in every factor across the political party subgroups. This indicates that measuring one's trust in a political entity handling the issue of interest can explain much of the variance of the political trust in that particular political entity. Lastly, the abridged EFA also demonstrated a possibility that one's party alignment with the officeholder (especially with the President) can be an important factor for the compartmentalization of political trust: those who share the party identity with the President tend to group the diffuse trust in the Presidency with other Presidency/President-related trusts, while those who do not share the party identity distinguish the diffuse trust in the Presidency from other Presidency/President-related trusts.

Table 3.11: Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Whole Survey Sample)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )	0.67			
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	0.82			
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.82			
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.75			
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )	<b>0.94</b>			
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )	0.89			
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )	0.87			
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )	0.85			
Congress ( <b>G</b> )		0.68		
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )		0.75		
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )		0.74		
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )		0.72		
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )		0.70		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.77		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )		<b>0.80</b>		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )		0.72		
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )			0.70	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )			0.68	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )			0.81	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.70	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.73	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )			<b>0.87</b>	
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )				<b>0.64</b>
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )				0.56
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.18	0.50	0.20
II	-	-	0.52	0.19
III	-	-	-	0.19

Table 3.12: Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Republicans)

	<b>Factors</b>		
	I	II	III
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	0.76		
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	<b>0.89</b>		
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.82		
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	0.73		
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.77		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	<b>0.89</b>		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.83		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.76		
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )		0.56	
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )		0.81	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )		0.69	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )		0.81	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )		0.62	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.77	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )		0.80	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )		<b>0.89</b>	
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )			0.77
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )			0.83
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )			0.81
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )			0.56
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )			<b>0.94</b>
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )			0.76
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )			0.73
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )			0.57
<b>Correlations between factors</b>			
I	-	0.49	0.20
II	-	-	0.51



Table 3.13: Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Democrats)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	0.61			
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.61			
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.66			
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )	0.81			
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )	<b>0.82</b>			
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )	0.77			
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )	0.80			
Congress ( <b>G</b> )		0.46		(0.55)
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )		0.72		
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )		0.61		
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )		0.63		
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )		0.44		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.67		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )		<b>0.75</b>		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )		0.64		
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )			0.52	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )			0.57	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )			0.74	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.57	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.57	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )			<b>0.82</b>	
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )				0.49
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )				<b>0.69</b>
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )				0.52
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.39	0.38	0.18
II	-	-	0.52	0.29
III	-	-	-	0.30

Table 3.14: Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust from First Round Survey (Independents)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	0.76			
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.72			
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.64			
Donald Trump ( <b>S</b> )	0.82			
Donald Trump ( <b>I1</b> )	<b>0.87</b>			
Donald Trump ( <b>I2</b> )	0.80			
Donald Trump ( <b>I3</b> )	0.79			
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )		0.76		
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )		0.73		
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )		0.82		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.71		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )		<b>0.86</b>		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )		0.84		
Congress ( <b>G</b> )			0.87	
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )			0.47	
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )			0.62	
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )			0.57	
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )			<b>0.95</b>	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.67	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.73	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )			0.59	
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )				0.46
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )				0.59
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )				<b>0.61</b>
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.35	0.29	0.09
II	-	-	0.58	0.03
III	-	-	-	0.09

## **Change in Power: Second Round of NPTMS After the 2020 Presidential Election**

Given that my findings presented above suggest that partisanship, coupled with which party controls the Presidency (and perhaps the Congress) affects the extent to which people distinguish specific and diffuse political trust, I conducted another round of the NPTMS after the 2020 presidential election, in which President Biden was elected. The same questionnaire was used with minor changes of President Donald Trump to President Joe Biden and the 2018 election to the 2020 election.

### ***Survey sample and limitations***

With the same platform, I recruited 712 U.S. adults in April 2021 during the Biden administration with the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. This sample meets the rule-of-thumb survey subject to item ratio by reaching the ratio of 19.87:1 (Costello & Osborne, 2005). As noted in the first round of NPTMS, using Mechanical Turk for the survey has some limitations by lacking randomness. However, the sample recruited for this time also has enough variances across key characteristics with enough size to provide good grounds for factor structuring.

The demographic summary of the survey participants is provided in Table 3.15: all five demographic factors—gender, race, education, party identification, and ideology—resemble those of the first-round sample. Similar to the gender ratio of the U.S. population, 44.8% of the respondents were male and 54.8% were female. Similar to the first-round participants, the racial ratio was also largely in line with the U.S. population with an under-sampled Hispanic/Latino population: 73.9% White, 8.4% Asian, 7.9% Black/African American, followed by 3.7% Hispanic/Latino, and 6.2% mixed races. This sample was also more educated than the average U.S. population: 27.2% had either graduate education or graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD), 44.1% of the respondents had completed an associate's or bachelor's degree, 18.1% had some college education with no degree, and 9.4% had only a high school degree.

Regarding both party affiliation and political ideology, Democrats/liberal respondents were more recruited in comparison to Republicans/conservative respondents: 40.5% of the respondents affiliated themselves with Democrats (16.3% strong Democrat; 24.3% Democrat), 36.7% affiliated with Independents (10.4% Independent but lean Democrat; 19.0% Independent; 7.3% independent but lean Republican), and 22.8% affiliated with Republicans (6.0% strong Republican; 16.7% Re-

publican). 40.2% of the respondents identified themselves as liberal, 37.8% as moderate, and 22.1% as conservative. Having a demographically similar sample with the first round, this sample can better demonstrate the effect of the change in power on how the public structures political trust.

Table 3.15: Demographic Summary of the Second Round NPTMS Participants (n=712)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	319	44.8%
Female	390	54.8%
Nonbinary/Others	3	0.4%
White	526	73.9%
Black/African American	56	7.9%
Asian	60	8.4%
Hispanic/Latino	26	3.7%
Mixed Race/Others	44	6.2%
High school degree or less	67	9.4%
Some college education with no degree	129	18.1%
Completed an associate's or bachelor's degree	314	44.1%
Some graduate education with no degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	45	6.3%
Have a graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	156	21.9%
Others	1	0.1%
Strong Democrat	116	16.3%
Democrat	173	24.3%
Independent but Lean Democrat	74	10.4%
Independent	135	19.0%
Independent but Lean Republican	52	7.3%
Republican	119	16.7%
Strong Republican	43	6.0%
Very Liberal	91	12.8%
Liberal	195	27.4%
Moderate but Lean Liberal	78	11.0%
Moderate	123	17.3%
Moderate but Lean Conservative	68	9.6%
Conservative	110	15.4%
Very Conservative	47	6.6%

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

Table 3.16 is the summary of the descriptive statistics of each type of political trust for the whole survey sample and the three political party subgroups.

The average levels of all NPTMS 36 trust items were 3.44, 4.10, 2.84, and 3.03 for the whole sample, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, respectively. There was a slight overall increase than the last time—Democrats exhibited a higher average trust than did Republicans in the previous round, while Republicans exhibited not much difference from the first round Democrats. In this round, Republicans held the lowest level of political trust, while Independents recorded the lowest in the previous round.

This time, out of all the objects of trust, the outcome of the 2020 election (6.24) and President Biden (5.49) were the objects Democrats held the highest trust in. In contrast, President Biden was the object Republicans held the lowest level of trust in (2.38). In the case of Independents, both the outcome of the 2020 election (3.19) and the Supreme Court (3.18) were the most trusted political entities, while the current Congress members (2.59) were the least trusted. This time, the Supreme Court was the most trusted political branch for Republicans and Independents among the three branches of the government. For Democrats, however, the Supreme Court was the least trusted political branch.

It was also noticeable that Republicans displayed a much lower level of trust in both the overall election process and the outcome of the 2020 election than did Democrats in the previous round. Considering Trump and his supporters' narrative that the 2020 election is a "fraud election" would have made those who supported Trump more likely to question and less likely to trust both the process and the result of the election.

As expected, people sharing the party with the officeholders—Democrats this time—tended to exhibit the highest levels of trust in most of the political entities measured, while those not sharing—Republicans—generally exhibited the lowest levels of trust.

Lastly, similar to the previous round's result, all subgroups demonstrated a lower level of trust when asked for issue-specific supports than diffuse and specific supports.

Table 3.16: Summary of the Second Round Mean Score Analysis

<b>Object of Trust</b>	<b>Whole Pop</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )	4.12 (1.76)	4.91 (1.39)	3.37 (1.78)	3.67 (1.75)
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	3.52 (1.95)	4.61 (1.57)	2.43 (1.76)	2.96 (1.74)
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	3.46 (1.92)	4.47 (1.60)	2.44 (1.72)	2.98 (1.82)
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	3.36 (1.93)	4.32 (1.69)	2.35 (1.65)	2.94 (1.86)
<b>Average</b>	<i>3.61 (1.92)</i>	<i>4.58 (1.58)</i>	<i>2.65 (1.78)</i>	<i>3.14 (1.82)</i>
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )	3.99 (2.12)	5.49 (1.32)	2.38 (1.68)	3.41 (1.96)
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )	3.57 (2.15)	4.89 (1.67)	2.21 (1.77)	2.96 (1.96)
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )	3.48 (2.10)	4.73 (1.66)	2.18 (1.74)	2.94 (1.95)
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )	3.40 (2.05)	4.58 (1.69)	2.19 (1.69)	2.85 (1.89)
<b>Average</b>	<i>3.61 (2.11)</i>	<i>4.92 (1.63)</i>	<i>2.24 (1.72)</i>	<i>3.04 (1.95)</i>
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	3.44 (1.57)	3.93 (1.35)	3.07 (1.61)	3.02 (1.65)
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	2.99 (1.62)	3.54 (1.52)	2.53 (1.59)	2.59 (1.54)
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	2.99 (1.65)	3.54 (1.58)	2.47 (1.49)	2.67 (1.70)
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	2.94 (1.62)	3.44 (1.49)	2.52 (1.60)	2.53 (1.64)
<b>Average</b>	<i>3.09 (1.63)</i>	<i>3.61 (1.50)</i>	<i>2.65 (1.59)</i>	<i>2.70 (1.64)</i>
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	3.45 (1.52)	4.06 (1.28)	3.00 (1.49)	2.90 (1.56)
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	3.01 (1.65)	3.67 (1.54)	2.49 (1.54)	2.44 (1.54)
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	2.98 (1.67)	3.60 (1.56)	2.44 (1.53)	2.53 (1.66)
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	2.89 (1.61)	3.43 (1.53)	2.43 (1.50)	2.51 (1.62)
<b>Average</b>	<i>3.08 (1.63)</i>	<i>3.69 (1.50)</i>	<i>2.59 (1.53)</i>	<i>2.59 (1.60)</i>
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )	4.34 (1.61)	4.52 (1.43)	4.38 (1.70)	3.91 (1.77)
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )	3.28 (1.73)	3.39 (1.66)	3.33 (1.77)	2.97 (1.78)
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )	3.23 (1.77)	3.37 (1.75)	3.21 (1.82)	2.96 (1.74)
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )	3.13 (1.73)	3.22 (1.70)	3.17 (1.78)	2.88 (1.71)
<b>Average</b>	<i>3.50 (1.78)</i>	<i>3.63 (1.72)</i>	<i>3.52 (1.83)</i>	<i>3.18 (1.80)</i>
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>S</b> )	4.14 (1.57)	4.20 (1.37)	4.32 (1.70)	3.73 (1.68)
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>I1</b> )	3.26 (1.74)	3.37 (1.68)	3.36 (1.78)	2.88 (1.77)
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>I2</b> )	3.18 (1.74)	3.36 (1.70)	3.10 (1.76)	2.93 (1.77)
Current Supreme Court members ( <b>I3</b> )	3.14 (1.69)	3.21 (1.69)	3.13 (1.74)	2.99 (1.63)
<b>Average</b>	<i>3.43 (1.74)</i>	<i>3.53 (1.66)</i>	<i>3.48 (1.81)</i>	<i>3.13 (1.75)</i>

Continued on next page

Table 3.16 – Continued from previous page

<b>Object of Trust</b>	<b>Whole Pop</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Ind</b>
Election ( <b>G</b> )	4.46 (1.91)	5.46 (1.37)	3.46 (1.83)	3.96 (1.98)
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	3.20 (1.71)	3.81 (1.62)	2.63 (1.61)	2.83 (1.63)
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	3.14 (1.70)	3.69 (1.62)	2.58 (1.57)	2.90 (1.70)
Election ( <b>I3</b> )	3.12 (1.72)	3.58 (1.64)	2.66 (1.63)	2.90 (1.78)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.48 (1.85)</b>	<b>4.14 (1.75)</b>	<b>2.83 (1.70)</b>	<b>3.14 (1.83)</b>
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>S</b> )	4.73 (2.23)	6.24 (1.14)	3.10 (2.00)	4.17 (2.25)
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	3.33 (1.94)	4.26 (1.74)	2.39 (1.71)	2.87 (1.81)
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	3.27 (1.86)	4.10 (1.69)	2.39 (1.65)	2.93 (1.80)
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	3.16 (1.81)	3.94 (1.69)	2.34 (1.62)	2.81 (1.65)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.62 (2.07)</b>	<b>4.64 (1.84)</b>	<b>2.55 (1.78)</b>	<b>3.19 (1.97)</b>
Democratic System ( <b>G</b> )	4.19 (1.69)	4.77 (1.42)	3.66 (1.70)	3.81 (1.81)
Democratic System ( <b>I1</b> )	3.39 (1.72)	4.04 (1.54)	2.87 (1.71)	2.88 (1.66)
Democratic System ( <b>I2</b> )	3.34 (1.69)	3.90 (1.56)	2.85 (1.60)	2.97 (1.76)
Democratic System ( <b>I3</b> )	3.29 (1.70)	3.83 (1.56)	2.82 (1.67)	2.91 (1.70)
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.55 (1.74)</b>	<b>4.14 (1.56)</b>	<b>3.05 (1.71)</b>	<b>3.14 (1.77)</b>
<b>Total Average of 36 Trust Items</b>	<b>3.44 (1.85)</b>	<b>4.10 (1.71)</b>	<b>2.84 (1.77)</b>	<b>3.03 (1.81)</b>

**Note a:** **G** refers to *diffuse* political trust. **S** refers to *specific* political trust. **I1**, **I2**, and **I3** each refers to *issue-specific* political trust—issues being the three most important problems the United States is facing today by each participant.

**Note b:** All results are provided in the form of *Mean (Standard Deviation)*.

### **Exploratory Factor Analysis with 36 Question Items**

The EFA with the second-round data generally reconfirmed the findings from the first round. Due to the similarities in results, this section only reports the EFA results of the three subgroups by party affiliation. Factor loadings with the whole survey sample can be found in Appendix B.

Democrats, in this round, factored the 36 political trust items as the Republicans did in the first round (see Table 3.17). Sharing partisanship with the officeholders of both executive and legislative branches made people not distinguish any diffuse trust from its corresponding specific trust—the trust in the Presidency was factored together with the trust in President Biden, and the trust in Congress and trust in its current members were factored together. Trust in the overall democratic system, national election process, and the outcomes of the 2020 U.S. election were grouped

Table 3.17: Factor Loadings on Political Trust from Second Round Survey (Democrats)

	<b>Factors</b>		
	I	II	III
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	0.61		
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	0.63		
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	<b>0.89</b>		
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	0.56		
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.74		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.73		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.91		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.55		
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.36		
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.55		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.51		
Demsys ( <b>I2</b> )	0.61		
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )		0.49	
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )		0.73	
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )		0.54	
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )		0.79	
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )		0.76	
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )		0.77	
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )		0.58	
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )		<b>0.88</b>	
Election ( <b>G</b> )		0.65	
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>S</b> )		0.59	
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I1</b> )		0.48	
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I3</b> )		0.51	
Demsys ( <b>I1</b> )		0.39	
Demsys ( <b>I3</b> )		0.36	
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )			0.70
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )			<b>0.87</b>
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )			0.67
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )			0.86
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )			0.79
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.80
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.66
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )			0.86
<b>Correlations between factors</b>			
I	-	0.57	0.62
II	-	-	0.45



with either trust in Congress and its current members or trust in the Presidency and President Biden. Such a result was not unexpected, considering that the 2020 U.S. election was a combination of the presidential and congressional elections.

Republicans in the second round factored the 36 items in a similar way Democrats did in the first round (see Table 3.18). The first two factors were composed of trust in the Presidency/President Biden, the Congress/current congress members, the overall national election process/outcomes of the 2020 national elections, and the overall democratic system. Unlike the first-round models, Republicans in the second round did not clearly distinguish items by institutions and their officeholders. The first factor was mostly composed of trust in political entities handling the second and third most important political/social issues, while the second factor was composed of trust in political entities handling the most important issue. This does not clearly correspond with the findings from the first round—trust organized by institutions and the people holding positions in the institutions—but the nature of the 2020 national election might have complicated the compartmentalization. Yet, similar to the Democrats in the first round, Republicans generally grouped diffuse and specific trusts in various political institutions and their officeholders as one factor: the fourth factor included diffuse trust in the Presidency, Congress, Supreme Court, the overall election process, and the overall democratic system, and specific trust in the current members of the Supreme Court and the outcome of the 2020 election. It is important to note that Republicans distinguished trust in the Presidency from other Presidency/President-related trusts, similar to how Democrats did in the first round. This confirms my hypothesis that such distinction is not a characteristic of a particular party but rather the result of a respondent's party alignment with the officeholder.

Lastly, Independents showed a slightly different factoring—they combined trust in the Presidency and Biden, Congress and its members, election and the 2020 election, and the overall democratic system together into one factor (see Table 3.19). Such a pattern was not observed during the first round. Extending the logic that party alignment between the officeholder(s) and the trustor influences the compartmentalization of political trust, I assume that Independents factored all trust measures except that in the Supreme Court together because the Presidency and both the House and Senate are represented by the Democratic Party.

Table 3.18: Factor Loadings on Political Trust from Second Round Survey (Republicans)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.54			
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.69			
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )	0.61			
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )	0.63			
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.72			
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	<b>0.84</b>			
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.46			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.69			
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.83			
Demsys ( <b>I2</b> )	0.44			
Demsys ( <b>I3</b> )	0.53			
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )		0.69		
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )		0.46		
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.80</b>		
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )		0.49		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.51		
Election ( <b>I1</b> )		0.66		
Election ( <b>I2</b> )		0.36		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I1</b> )		0.79		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I2</b> )		0.50		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I3</b> )		0.39		
Demsys ( <b>I1</b> )		0.59		
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )			0.72	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )			0.72	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )			0.75	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.77	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )			<b>0.84</b>	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )			0.83	
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )				0.56
Congress ( <b>G</b> )				0.47
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )				0.61
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )				0.53
Election ( <b>G</b> )				0.65
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>S</b> )				0.54
Demsys ( <b>G</b> )				<b>0.79</b>
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.66	0.43	0.45
II	-	-	0.37	0.44
III	-	-	-	0.49

Table 3.19: Factor Loadings on Political Trust from Second Round Survey (Independents)

	<b>Factors</b>		
	I	II	III
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )	0.40		
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	0.58		
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.90		
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.84		
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )	0.57		
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )	0.74		
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )	<b>0.99</b>		
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )	0.91		
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	0.59		
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	0.56		
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.85		
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	0.82		
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.58		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.63		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.89		
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.84		
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.41	(0.49)	
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.69		
Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.56		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.65		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.87		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.77		
Demsys ( <b>I1</b> )	0.45	(0.47)	
Demsys ( <b>I2</b> )	0.70		
Demsys ( <b>I3</b> )	0.65		
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )		0.87	
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )		0.86	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )		0.60	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )		0.70	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )		<b>0.88</b>	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.81	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )		0.54	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )		0.71	
Demsys ( <b>G</b> )		0.63	
Election ( <b>G</b> )			0.43
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>S</b> )			0.46
<b>Correlations between factors</b>			
I	-	0.73	0.11
II	-	-	0.11

### ***Exploratory Factor Analysis with 24 Question Items***

EFA with 24 items provided much clearer and more organized factor structures in this round as well. Democrats, sharing party with the President and the major party of the Congress, divided the items into three factors—trust in the Supreme Court/current members (Factor 1), trust in the Presidency/President (Factor 2), and trust in the Congress/current members (Factor 3). Each factor included diffuse, specific, and issue-specific trusts in the corresponding government branch (see Table 3.20). All three items were highly correlated to each other.

Republicans, without the party alignment with the officeholders of the Presidency and the major party of the Congress, had four factors (see Table 3.21)—trust in the Supreme Court/current members (Factor 1), specific and issue-specific trusts in the Presidency/President (Factor 2), trust in the Congress/current members (Factor 3), and diffuse trust in the Presidency (Factor 4). Factor 1 and 3 included all diffuse, specific, and issue-specific trusts in the Supreme Court/current members and the Congress/current members, respectively. However, as observed from the Democrats in the first round, diffuse trust in the Presidency was distinguished from other Presidency/President-related trust items. This reconfirms that the alignment of the party identity with the officeholder has a significant effect on how the public conceptualizes a certain political trust, but such an effect was not observed in formulating the trust in the Congress/current members.

Lastly, Independents grouped the items into two different factors—the first factor including all trust in the Presidency/President and the Congress/current members, and the second factor including all trust in the Supreme Court/current members (see Table 3.22). Independents did not distinguish their trust in the executive branch and the legislative branch, a pattern similar to the factor layout from the EFA with 36 question items. As mentioned earlier, such a pattern was not found in any political subgroups but the Independents subgroup in the second round.

Table 3.20: Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust from Second Round Survey (Democrats)

	<b>Factors</b>		
	I	II	III
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )	0.63		
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )	<b>0.91</b>		
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )	0.76		
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )	0.88		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.71		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.84		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.75		
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.88		
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )		0.46	
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )		0.79	
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )		0.65	
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )		0.84	
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )		0.74	
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )		0.86	
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )		0.70	
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )		<b>0.94</b>	
Congress ( <b>G</b> )			0.75
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )			0.64
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )			0.77
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )			0.62
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )			<b>0.87</b>
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.74
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.84
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )			0.60
<b>Correlations between factors</b>			
I	-	0.53	0.65
II	-	-	0.64

Table 3.21: Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust from Second Round Survey (Republicans)

	<b>Factors</b>			
	I	II	III	IV
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )	0.58			
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )	0.73			
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )	0.80			
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )	0.80			
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.61			
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.80			
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )	<b>0.94</b>			
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.90			
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )		0.87		
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )		0.63		
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )		0.44	(0.48)	
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )		0.73		
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.93</b>		
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )		0.66		
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )		0.56		
Congress ( <b>G</b> )			0.50	
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )			0.31	
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )			0.64	
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )			<b>0.81</b>	
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )			0.50	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.58	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )			0.74	
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )				<b>0.35</b>
<b>Correlations between factors</b>				
I	-	0.46	0.47	0.32
II	-	-	0.67	0.21
III	-	-	-	0.15

Table 3.22: Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust from Second Round Survey (Independents)

	<b>Factors</b>	
	I	II
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )	0.56	
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	0.66	
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.88	
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.80	
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )	0.76	
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )	0.80	
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )	<b>0.98</b>	
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )	0.91	
Congress ( <b>G</b> )	0.74	
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )	0.62	
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )	0.77	
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )	0.72	
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )	0.69	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )	0.66	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )	0.81	
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )	0.80	
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )		0.76
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.88</b>
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )		0.75
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )		0.84
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )		0.78
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.88</b>
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )		0.71
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )		0.83
<b>Correlations between factors</b>		
I	-	0.75

## **Discussion**

Several important findings appeared across the two rounds of the survey.

First, there was no distinction found between diffuse and specific political trusts—trust in the Congress and its current members, and trust in the Supreme Court and its current members were not distinguished regardless of one’s political party identification. In the case of the Presidency and President, people who shared party identity with the President did not make the distinction between diffuse and specific trusts, while those who did not share party identity with the President did.

Second, distinctions were made based on the institution/system and the officeholders, instead of the traditional distinction between diffuse and specific support. Due to this characteristic, it was possible to detect at least three different types of political trust for three different branches of the government. Trusts in the overall democratic system and the overall national election process of the United States were generally grouped with trust in either the Presidency/President or the Congress/current members, depending on the nature of the election. This implies that it is important to measure trust in all three government branches to obtain an extensive understanding of political trust.

Third, issue-specific trust, which only measured how different political entities handle three different political/social issues that matter the most to the respondent, was grouped according to the political entity, not by specific issues. And within each factor, issue-specific trust items of the corresponding political entity explained much of the variance. This suggests that the method of measuring people’s trust in a political entity handling the issues of *their* interest can not only tell much about the trust in the entity but also be a more economical measurement, unless a researcher is interested in how people perceive a particular issue being handled by the government.

## **Conclusion: Introduction of the new scale**

One of the main goals of Study 1 was to create a new scale for measuring political trust. At this stage, I used Cronbach’s coefficient alpha to suggest different sets of questions for the new scale. It is important to note that the high alpha value does not imply that the measurement is unidimensional; a high alpha value indicates that a measure has high internal consistency.

I first measured Cronbach’s alpha using all 36 items of political trust measured during the



first round of the NPTMS; alpha based upon the covariances was 0.961 (0.961 for the Democrats subgroup; 0.959 for the Republicans subgroup; 0.961 for the Independents subgroup), indicating that this is a highly reliable measure. Dropping any item(s) appeared to have no significant influence on reliability. Similarly high Cronbach's alphas were found from the second round of the NPTMS as well. With the whole participant sample, the alpha was 0.979. The subgroups' alphas were 0.972, 0.977, and 0.984 for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, respectively. Dropping specific item(s) improves reliability only marginally, and there were no significant differences among the political subgroups, indicating high internal consistency of the NPTMS regardless of one's party identification.

I then measured Cronbach's alpha with various subsets of political trust measured (e.g., the inclusion of only general trust, only specific trust, only issue-specific trust). Among various sets, the set including all 27 issue-specific trusts recorded the highest Cronbach's alpha, 0.954 (0.957 for the Democrats subgroup; 0.953 for the Republicans subgroup; 0.953 for the Independents subgroup). The next highest Cronbach's alpha was observed from the set including measures on both general trust and issue-specific trust in institutions (e.g., trust in the Congress to handle a specific issue). This mixed set recorded its alpha to range between 0.93 and 0.94. The second-round results did not differ much—the set with 27 issue-specific trusts recorded the second-highest Cronbach's alpha, 0.977, and there was no mixed set with Cronbach's alpha lower than 0.819, a value observed from the set of four specific trust items. Cronbach's alphas demonstrate that any set of the questions introduced in the NPTMS can be used depending on the trust type of interest.

However, determining which questions to include in the new scale based solely on Cronbach's coefficient alpha does not fully represent the variance that can be explained by each type of political trust. The findings from EFA suggest two points to consider when creating a more refined set of items that measure political trust. First, the new scale should include the trust measurement of the three branches of government. Trust in three branches was generally separated across party identities and the two separate rounds of NPTMS. When including the 24 trust items measuring the trust in three branches, Cronbach's alphas were 0.943 and 0.969 for the first round and second round, respectively. Both EFA and Cronbach's alpha demonstrate that the scale including the 24 items can be a good measurement of political trust. Higher Cronbach's alphas were observed when trust items on the election system and the overall democratic system were included. However, they

appeared to be context-dependent in EFA, as they were grouped with either Presidency/President or Congress/current members depending on the nature of the election, rather than forming independent variables. Therefore, I would suggest including those items depending on the scope and purpose of the survey.

Furthermore, when we take into account the variance explained by each question in EFA, the new scale would provide a more accurate understanding of political trust by including issue-specific trust items. One noticeable pattern observed from EFA was that issue-specific trust items have high factor loadings, indicating that they have a significant influence on each factor. Based on this result, it is possible to conclude that the new scale should include questions measuring the respondent's trust in specific institutions handling issues of one's interest. This echoes the analysis of Cronbach's alphas provided above as well.

Study 1 attempted to find a valid and reliable measure of political trust by focusing on how the public formulates the concept in their mind. The NPTMS questions developed based on Study 1a appear to be a highly reliable measure of political trust. Various subsets derived from the complete set of 36 items also appeared valid and had high internal consistencies. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that one can freely subset trust items based on one's specific research interest. Among possible subsets, I chose the subset with 24 items (including all diffuse, specific, issue-specific) measuring trust in the Presidency/President, Congress/current members, and Supreme Court/current members to provide an extensive understanding of political trust in an economical manner. However, despite the measurement's reliability and internal consistency, I was not able to assess the validity of NPTMS, beyond its face validity.

Nonetheless, I will use the complete NPTMS set of 36 questions in Study 3. As EFA results show, distinctions were made based on the institution/system and the officeholders. In other words, people compartmentalize political trust in their minds according to political branches. Therefore, if someone were to read an article that focuses on one political branch, his/her trust in the specific branch could be manipulated without affecting that in other branches. I aim to investigate how reading an article shared by a partner with different levels of interpersonal social trust influences political trust in a particular political entity by using the 36 item set.

**Study 2****Conceptualizing and Manipulating Social Trust**

To study the central research question of this dissertation (Study 3), both an understanding of the factors that lead to online interpersonal social trust (OIST), and the ability to experimentally manipulate these factors and the resulting level of OIST are necessary. Study 2 aims to investigate the questions related to OIST.

As suggested in my central research questions and hypotheses, the notion of OIST goes beyond source credibility by putting more focus on trustee's trustworthiness, and source similarity by broadening the notion of similarity to be more than demographic similarity. OIST and its manipulation strategy are based on previous findings showing that similarity yields a higher level of social trust (e.g., Berscheid, 1998; Einwiller, 2003; Huston & Levinger, 1978; Ziegler & Golbeck, 2007) and that shared experiences with time spent together are foundational to interpersonal social trust (e.g., Sheppard & Sherman, 1998; Sztompka, 1999). OIST by its nature resembles interpersonal trust but limits its context to the online sphere where many of today's information and knowledge exchanges take place.

Study 2a identifies what information about an online partner is most likely to increase OIST, doing so in different types of online interactions. Study 2b then tests whether it is possible to manipulate levels of OIST in an experimental setting by controlling the trust-inducing information uncovered in Study 2a. Both parts of Study 2 utilize data from online experiments through Amazon Mechanical Turk.

#### **4.1 Study 2a. Identifying Factors that Increase Online Interpersonal Social Trust in Varied Settings**

##### **Methods**

Participants were told that the study was designed to test how groups of individuals can work together in an online setting. They were asked to answer a series of questions about themselves, and then play a set of selection games with two other participants (“players”) who had filled out the same questionnaire. In reality, however, these players and their profiles were simulated. In each round of the game, the participants were asked to choose the player they thought would be the more fitting for a given statement, with both the players and the statement changing in each round. Before making each decision, participants received information about how similar or dissimilar each of the two players were to them in eight different areas (details described in *Construction of Player Similarity Profiles*).

In providing the statements, this experiment set up two scenarios, in which participants were randomly assigned to one or the other. In one scenario, participants were asked to imagine a situation in which they were receiving information from another player in an online setting, such as Facebook Messenger, Instagram direct message, Twitter mention, and/or email. The information could be about anything—from finding a restaurant for dinner to finding a stock to invest in. In the other scenario, participants were asked to imagine a situation in which they were purchasing something from another player in an online setting, and items can be anything from a pen to a laptop. In both scenarios, participants were asked to choose which of two other players they thought would be a better partner based on the given statement, providing different reasons to trust (details described in *Contexts for Social Trust—Case Scenarios and Choice Statements*). Each participant completed 13 rounds of this selection process.

The game was constructed to be a simultaneous game, in which experiment participants (including, in theory, with the simulated players) make decisions simultaneously, so no choice is or can be made based on the other person’s selection or as a reciprocation to the other person’s choices. Participants were specifically told that they were assigned different players in each round, so that there was no need for them to make choices based on any previous rounds but only based on the profiles of the two players in each round. The choice of the simultaneous game format is suitable for

measuring initial trust, where participants base their trust on information about the other person in relation to norms, roles, and assumptions, rather than on ongoing and interactive past experiences with the person (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006). This game format is particularly beneficial for this study, which focuses on how people weigh different pieces of information and cues in order to assess the risk of trusting an otherwise unknown person, rather than assessing trustworthiness based on past experiences through continuous interactions.

### ***Construction of Player Similarity Profiles***

Participants were provided with eight pieces of information about each of the two simulated players in each round; participants were led to believe that the simulated players filled out the same questionnaire filled out by the participants and that the information they had about the simulated players came from the answers to the questionnaire (see Appendix C for the questions used in the experiment). These profiles described how similar or dissimilar the players were to the participant in eight areas: gender, race, age, religion, party identification, religiosity, political preferences, and cultural preferences. Information on gender, race, age, religion, and party identification was provided as either *same as yours* or *different from yours*. Information on religiosity, political preference, and cultural preference was provided as either *highly similar (90%-100% match)* or *highly dissimilar (0%-10% match)*. In the construction of simulated players' profiles, values for all eight pieces of information were randomly assigned. To avoid possible order effects, I presented the eight information pieces in a randomized order. Figure 4.1 below is an example of the experiment page the participants saw in each round of the player selection.



Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more truthful in his/her dealings with you when sharing information with you online.**

<p><b>Player ID: 467859</b></p> <p><b>Religiosity:</b> Highly SIMILAR (90% - 100% match)</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly DISSIMILAR (0% - 10% match)</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly DISSIMILAR (0% - 10% match)</p> <p><b>Party ID:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p> <p><b>Race:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p> <p><b>Gender:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p> <p><b>Age Group:</b> SAME as yours</p> <p><b>Religion:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p>	<p><b>Player ID: 900262</b></p> <p><b>Religiosity:</b> Highly SIMILAR (90% - 100% match)</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly SIMILAR (90% - 100% match)</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly SIMILAR (90% - 100% match)</p> <p><b>Party ID:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p> <p><b>Race:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p> <p><b>Gender:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p> <p><b>Age Group:</b> DIFFERENT from yours</p> <p><b>Religion:</b> SAME as yours</p>
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Figure 4.1: Example of the Experiment Page

### ***Contexts for Social Trust—Case Scenarios and Choice Statements***

As mentioned earlier, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two case scenarios—either *information recipient condition* or *product purchaser condition*. Previous trust research shares the assumption that trust is about taking risks in uncertain conditions (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). E-commerce, by its nature, entails many risks such as uncertainties of product quality and vendors, and transactions involving personal information. For this reason, the action of *purchasing something online* has been used as an expression of trust in many previous studies (e.g., McKnight et al., 2002; Mutz, 2005; Thaw et al., 2009). Study 2 and Study 3 of this dissertation focus on the action of *receiving information online* from another person. Purchasing something and receiving information in an online sphere are similar to each other as 1) both actions are done online, and 2) both actions involve receiving something from a person whom the participant does

not know in person. However, due to the difference in *what* they receive, this experiment used both scenarios to test if the areas of similarity most relevant to the formation of OIST differed depending on the scenario.

Scholars have found that trust is a multi-dimensional concept, and trusting belief is one of its constructs (McKnight & Chervany, 2001; McKnight et al., 2002). Trusting belief is a trustor's perception that the trustee has attributes that will play out as beneficial (Mayer et al., 1995). Therefore, it often resonates with the characteristics of the trustee. Through meta-analysis, McKnight and his colleagues (2002) found that competence, benevolence, and integrity are the three trusting beliefs that appear most frequently and relevantly, in theory. Through experiments, they confirmed that trustors distinguish different bases of trust, further corroborating their typology of interpersonal trust. Based on this research, I attempted to test if people utilize and weigh pieces of information differently based on the McKnight typology. To do so, I created 13 descriptive "choice statements" that measure three main trusting beliefs—benevolence belief, competence belief, and integrity belief. Eleven of these statements were based on questions developed by McKnight and his colleagues, adjusted to fit the two case scenarios of the experiment (see Table 4.1 for details). I then developed and added two additional statements that are most often used to measure interpersonal trust—*Choose which of the two other players you think is more trustworthy* and *Choose which of the two other players whom you would trust more*.

Table 4.1: Trusting Beliefs and Statements Used for the Experiment

<b>Trusting Beliefs</b>	<b>Original Statements (McKnights et al., 2002)</b>	<b>Statements Altered</b>
<b>Benevolence</b>	I believe that LegalAdvice.com would act in my best interest.	Choose which of the two other players you think would act in your best interest more when sharing any information with you on-line.  Choose which of the two other players you think would act in your best interest more when buying something from him/her on-line.
	If I required help, LegalAdvice.com would do its best to help me.	Choose which of the two other players you think would do his/her best to help you more when sharing information with you online, if you required help.  Choose which of the two other players you think would do his/her best to help you more when buying something from him/her on-line, if you required help.
	LegalAdvice.com is interested in my well-being, not just its own.	Choose which of the two other players you think would be more interested in your well-being when sharing information with you on-line, not just his/her own.  Choose which of the two other players you think would be more interested in your well-being when buying something from him/her online, not just his/her own.
<b>Integrity</b>	LegalAdvice.com is truthful in its dealings with me.	Choose which of the two other players you think would be more truthful in his/her dealings with you when sharing information with you online.  Choose which of the two other players you think would be more truthful in his/her dealings with you when buying something from him/her online.
	I would characterize LegalAdvice.com as honest.	Choose which of the two other players you would characterize as more honest when sharing information with you online.  Choose which of the two other players you would characterize as more honest when buying something from him/her online.

*Continued on next page*



Table 4.1 – Continued from previous page

<b>Trusting Beliefs</b>	<b>Original Statements (McKnights et al., 2002)</b>	<b>Statements Altered</b>
	<p>LegalAdvice.com would keep its commitments.</p>	<p>Choose which of the two other players you think would keep his/her commitments more when sharing information with you online.</p> <p>Choose which of the two other players you think would keep his/her commitments more when buying something from him/her on-line.</p>
	<p>LegalAdvice.com is sincere and genuine.</p>	<p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be more sincere and genuine when sharing information with you online.</p> <p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be more sincere and genuine when buying something from him/her on-line.</p>
<b>Competence</b>	<p>LegalAdvice.com is competent and effective in providing legal advice.</p>	<p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be more competent and effective when sharing information online.</p> <p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be more competent and effective when selling something online.</p>
	<p>LegalAdvice.com performs its role of giving legal advice very well.</p>	<p>Choose which of the two other players you think would better perform his/her role of sharing information online.</p> <p>Choose which of the two other players you think would better perform his/her role of selling something online.</p>
	<p>Overall, LegalAdvice.com is a capable and proficient Internet legal advice provider.</p>	<p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be a more capable and proficient information sharer in the online sphere.</p> <p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be a more capable and proficient seller in the online market.</p>
	<p>In general, LegalAdvice.com is very knowledgeable about the law.</p>	<p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be more knowledgeable as an information-sharer in the online sphere, in general.</p> <p>Choose which of the two other players you think would be more knowledgeable as an online seller in general.</p>

## Results

To implement this experiment, I recruited 1,099 participants, who are all Americans over 18 years old, through Amazon Mechanical Turk. For the analysis, I employed a conjoint experimental design. Conjoint designs are particularly advantageous for estimating the causal effects of several different treatments—different pieces of information about the trustee in this experiment—simultaneously. The essential underlying assumption of these designs is that the properties one wishes to estimate the causal effects for are randomly assigned, guaranteeing their independence (Hainmueller et al., 2014).

In the experiment, pieces of information displayed in profiles were all randomly assigned independently of all other treatments. This independence of each piece of information assures the estimation of the average marginal component effect (AMCE) for each piece of information indicating the marginal effect of the cue averaged over the joint distribution of all other classes of information (Hainmueller et al., 2014). For the convenience of interpretation of AMCE, I report the marginal means for some cases and the results of omnibus F-tests based on the suggestions made by Leeper et al. (2020). The reported marginal means are interpreted as the probability of a profile being selected when assigned with specific characteristics.

In the analysis, I first compared if the participants utilized the eight types of information differently based on the *scenario* (information sharing or product purchasing) they were asked to imagine when making selections of player profiles. Whether the participants utilized information differently by the *choice statements* that are associated with three different trusting beliefs and general interpersonal trust was also examined. Based on the findings that a unique pattern exists in how individuals utilize different pieces of information to determine their trust in someone, this study investigated how much influence each information piece has in forming social trust when controlling for demographic variables. Previous studies found that the formation of social trust is also influenced by other factors, such as group identity. Thus, this study tested if there were different patterns in the weights for each information piece based on one's party identity and based on one's strength of partisanship.

### ***Participant Sample and Limitations***

Table 4.2 provides an overview of the participants. 51.1% of participants were male and 48.2% were female, relatively close to the actual gender breakdown of the adult U.S. population. Racially, 75.1% of the participants were white, followed by 9.0% African American, 7.5% Asian, 4.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 4.1% other and mixed races, again largely in line with the U.S. population composition, with the important exception of the Hispanic/Latino population. Similar to many Amazon Mechanical Turk samples, this survey sample was generally more educated than the average U.S. population: 19% had a graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD); 50.0% of the participants had completed an associate's or bachelor's degree; 17.8% had some college education with no degree; 8.6% had only a high school degree or less.

Regarding party affiliation, 40.5% of the participants affiliated with Democrat (15.0% strong Democrat; 25.6% Democrat), 24.4% affiliated with Republican (6.5% strong Republican; 17.9% Republican), and 35.1% identified oneself as an Independent (12.6% Independent but lean Democrat; 14.2% Independent; 8.3% Independent but lean Republican). Lastly, with regard to political ideology, a similar composition was observed—40.0% of liberals, 23.3% of conservatives, and 36.7% of moderates. People who affiliate with the Democrats or identify as liberals were slightly overrepresented as compared to the general U.S. population.

While not fully representative in some areas, this experiment randomized participants to treatment, mitigating possible biases. In addition, subgroup analyses were done based on participants' party affiliation in order to further examine if any differences exist based on party. Given both variance across key characteristics and the nature of the experiment, I believe the study sample is adequate for testing which information is most influential in deciding whether or not to trust a potential online partner.

Table 4.2: Demographic Summary of the Study 2a Experiment Participants (n=1,099)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	562	51.1%
Female	530	48.2%
Nonbinary/Others	7	0.7%
White	825	75.1%
Black/African American	99	9.0%
Asian	82	7.5%
Hispanic/Latino	47	4.3%
Mixed Race/Others	46	4.1%
High school degree or less	99	9.0%
Some college education with no degree	196	17.8%
Completed an associate's or bachelor's degree	550	50.0%
Some graduate education with no degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	42	3.8%
Have a graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	209	19.0%
Others	3	0.3%
Strong Democrat	165	15.0%
Democrat	281	25.6%
Independent but Lean Democrat	138	12.6%
Independent	156	14.2%
Independent but Lean Republican	91	8.3%
Republican	197	17.9%
Strong Republican	71	6.5%
Very Liberal	151	13.7%
Liberal	289	26.3%
Moderate but Lean Liberal	117	10.7%
Moderate	201	18.3%
Moderate but Lean Conservative	85	7.7%
Conservative	196	17.8%
Very Conservative	60	5.5%

### ***Comparison between Scenario 1 and Scenario 2***

Among 1,099 participants, 547 of the participants were assigned to *scenario 1*, and 552 of them were assigned to *scenario 2*. Each participant made 13 choices between two simulated players—for scenario 1, 3,415 choices between 6,830 simulated confederates were produced, and for scenario 2, 3,792 choices between 7,584 simulated confederates were produced.

A comparison between the respondents of scenarios 1 and 2 in utilizing different profile information pieces was estimated with questions all combined using ANOVA. There was no difference between the two cases ( $F(9, 14450) = 0.57, p = .83$ ). This indicates that there was no statistically significant difference in how participants used each piece of information when selecting a player they deemed most suited for information sharing (scenario 1) or product purchasing (scenario 2). This lack of a significant difference can be observed in Figure 4.2 which displays the marginal means for each conjoint feature of the eight information pieces provided in the player profiles. The x-axis indicates marginal means where the mid-line (0.5) indicates a coin-flip decision having a 50% chance of selection. Since the selection was made between two simulated players, the marginal mean of 0.5 demonstrates the cases in which a completely random choice is made between the two. Each bar indicates a 95% confidence interval.

Several other findings emerge from the analysis summarized in Figure 4.2. As expected, observed across the eight information pieces, high similarity scores between participants and a simulated player produced significantly higher chances of selecting the player, while low similarity produced significantly lower chances of selecting the player. Within this overall pattern, similarity or dissimilarity in party identification, political preferences, cultural preferences, and religiosity had the strongest effects on the likelihood of choice (see Figure D1 in Appendix D for estimated AMCE result).

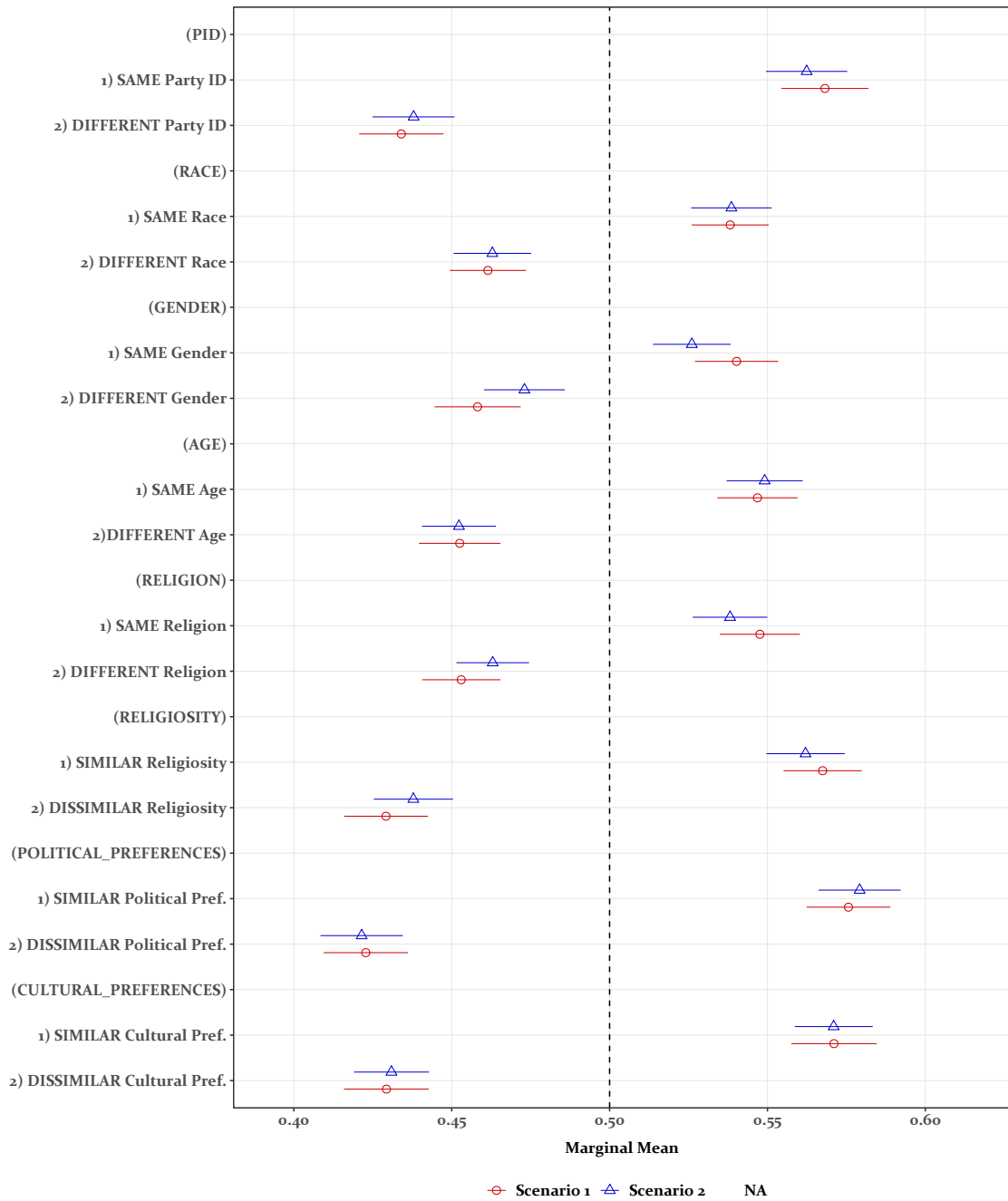


Figure 4.2: Marginal Means for Scenario Subgroups

Although no difference in the effects of similarity or dissimilarity of information between the two scenarios was found when all 13 choice statements were included, it is possible that the effects may vary by choice statements. To test this, I administered ANOVA testing and created tables with the estimated AMCEs of the two scenarios for each choice statement group—benevolence, competence, integrity, and generic trust statements.

ANOVA results confirmed that there are no differences in how the participants utilized each piece of similarity/dissimilarity information between the participants of the two scenarios regardless of the type of the choice statements (*benevolence*:  $F(9, 3045) = 0.857, p = .56$ ; *competence*:  $F(9, 4063) = 0.6342, p = .77$ ; *integrity*:  $F(9, 4063) = 0.2566, p = .99$ ; *general*:  $F(9, 3216) = 0.534, p = .85$ ). Figure D1 in Appendix D provides the estimated AMCE results for both scenarios subgrouped by the four choice statement groups. As with the bars in Figure 4.2, each indicates a 95% confidence interval. If a bar showing the difference between the two scenarios (right panels of Figure D1) includes 0.0, it indicates that there is no statistical difference between them. As the ANOVA result indicates, AMCE results generally demonstrate no difference in the pattern of information utilization by the case scenario regardless of the choice statement groups. The one exception was party identity when the choice statements were about the benevolence of the trustee; similarity in party identity elicited a greater likelihood of selecting a player in both scenarios but slightly more so in the information recipient scenario. However, this difference was only marginally significant, making it difficult to argue that individuals utilize certain information pieces differently in a particular scenario with a particular statement.

Based on these analyses, I concluded that the scenarios of receiving information or purchasing something online do not make a difference in how participants used each type of information in the initial formation of OIST. Therefore, the analyses described afterward were conducted with all participants combined regardless of the scenario they were assigned to.

### ***Comparison by Description Choice Statements Using the Full Sample***

1,527 choices between 3,054 simulated confederates were made with the benevolence statements as the player selection criteria. For both competence and integrity statements, 2,036 choices between 4,072 confederates were made. Lastly, 1,608 choices between 3,216 confederates were made when the general social trust statements were provided.

Unlike the findings of previous scholars, I found no statistically significant differences across the choice statements presented as the selection criteria, based on the results of omnibus F-test ( $F(27, 14387) = 0.96, p = .52$ ). This indicates that participants utilized each piece of information about other players in the same pattern regardless of the aspect of social trust being emphasized. Figure 4.3 presents the marginal means for each conjoint feature, with each colored line representing different types of choice statements. The figure demonstrates that while participants place different weights on each piece of information when they were asked to choose a player whom they think would be a better partner, these weights did not vary significantly based on the choice statements that targeted different trusting beliefs of interpersonal social trust. Based on this finding, the analyses to follow were conducted without distinguishing the four types of choice statements.





Figure 4.3: Marginal Means for Description Statement Subgroups

### ***Information Weight Pattern & Subgroup Analysis***

Figure 4.4 displays the marginal means, on the x-axis, for each conjoint feature. As with prior figures, each bar indicates a 95% confidence interval. The figure shows that all eight pieces of information either increased (when similar) or decreased (when dissimilar) the probability of selecting a player with statistical significance.

With the whole participant sample, each piece of information elicited different magnitudes of the effect, implying people put different weights on each piece of information in determining whom to trust, with some of these differences in effect size being statistically significant. Both similarity and dissimilarity in party identification, political similarity, cultural similarity, and religiosity had relatively stronger effects on the selection of the other player than those in race, gender, age, and religion.

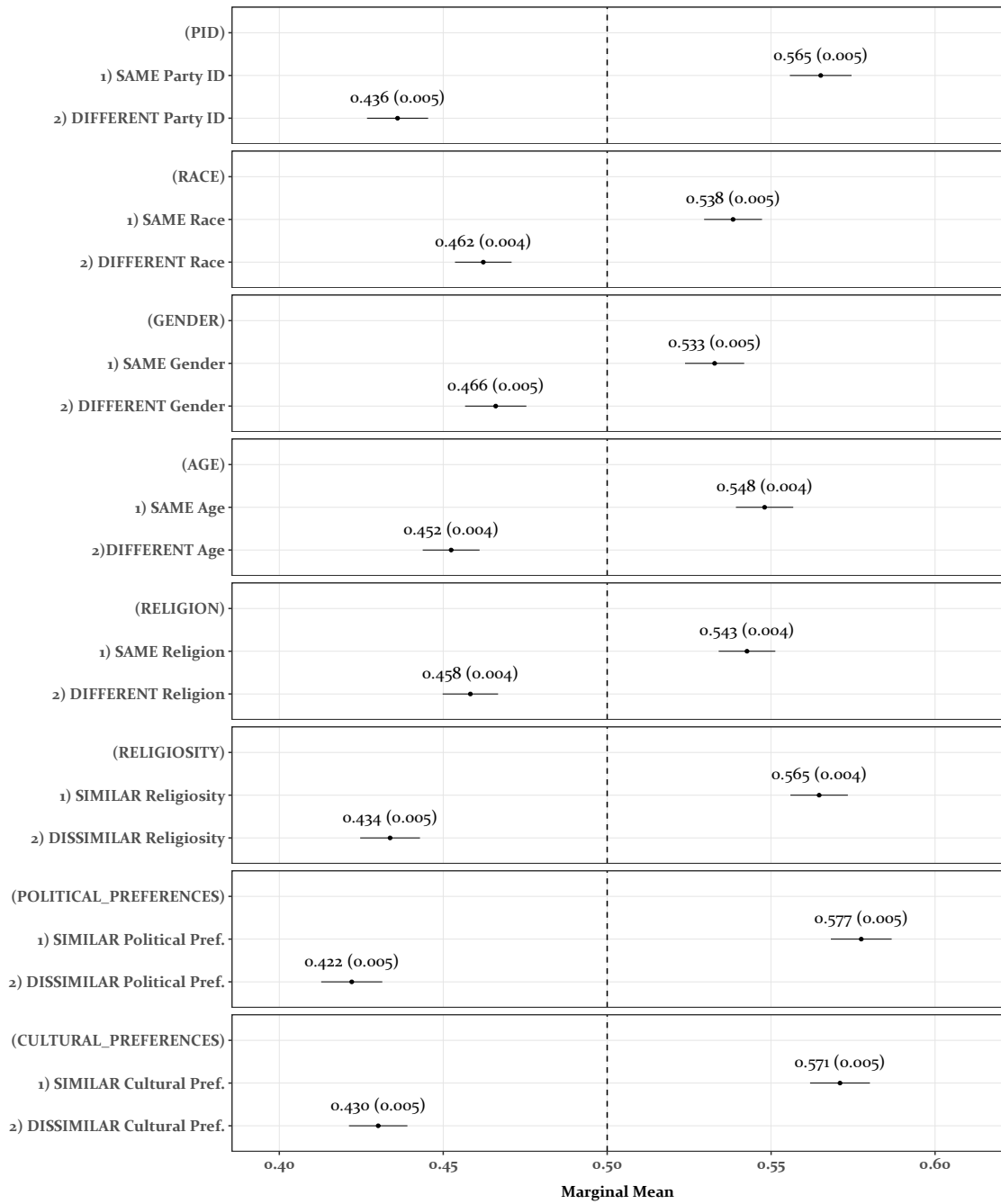


Figure 4.4: Marginal Means for Each Information Piece (Whole Participants)

The finding that both party identification and political similarity play significant roles in player selection raises the question of whether this effect varies by the factors related to politics, such as one's party identification and the strength of partisanship. To test for this possibility, I conducted analyses with three different subgroups of the participants—strong Democrats, strong Republicans, and political moderates.

Figure 4.5 shows the marginal means for each conjoint feature for strong Democrats, strong Republicans, and Moderates, indicated in different shapes and colors. On one hand, both strong Democrats and strong Republicans put significantly more weight on the trustee's party identification to select a partner than did Moderates. On the other hand, for Moderates, the same information elicited one of the least significant effects among the eight different types of information provided. In turn, information on religiosity and cultural similarity/dissimilarity had more significant effects on player selection for the Moderates than for the strong Democrats and strong Republicans. The remaining types of information showed no statistically significant differences in how they were utilized between strong party identifiers of either party and Moderates.

Distinctive patterns of information usage were found between strong partisans and weak partisans but not between parties (provided in Figures D2, D3 of Appendix D). F-test further supported that there were no significant differences in how strong Democrats and strong Republicans utilized the information to make trust choices between the two simulated players ( $F(9, 9387) = 1.26, p = .25$ ).

Finally, estimated AMCE results comparing strong Democrats to strong Republicans (provided in Figure D2 of Appendix D), and strong partisans of either party to moderates (provided in Figure D3 of Appendix D) reconfirmed the conclusions presented above. When strong Democrats and Republicans were grouped as strong partisans, they found the partner sharing party identification much more trustable than political moderates did with the same information, with statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ). In the case of moderates, the similarities in cultural preferences ( $p < .001$ ) and religiosity ( $p = .005$ ) became the strong bases of trust in the partner when compared with how strong partisans used the same information cues.



Figure 4.5: Marginal Means for Subgroups by Participants' Party Identification

## **Study 2a Discussion and Conclusion**

Study 2a focused on (1) how and what kinds of information about a potential trustee with whom the trustor does not have any prior interactions influence the formation of OIST, (2) whether this varied by type of task or by specific elements of social trust, and (3) whether this varied by characteristics of the trustor—all in an effort to build a foundation for Studies 2b and 3, which require the manipulation of online social trust between two strangers regarding the sharing of information.

My findings suggest the following. First, the weights placed on different demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral similarity/dissimilarity profiles did not vary significantly by whether the task to be performed was information sharing (the task most relevant to my dissertation) or product selection (the task most commonly studied in prior trust research). Second, and contrary to prior research, these weights did not vary significantly by the quality of social trust (benevolence, competence, integrity, or generic trust) being tapped. Third, all eight of the similarity/dissimilarity information pieces included in my study had significant effects on the choice of a partner, with greater similarity increasing the likelihood of being selected, and greater dissimilarity decreasing this likelihood. Fourth, the weights placed on each of these characteristics varied, with similarity and dissimilarity in party identification, political similarity, cultural similarity, and religiosity having the strongest effects on the selection of a trustable player. Fifth, political moderates were less likely to privilege similarity and more likely to discount dissimilarity in partisanship or political preferences than were strong partisans of both parties, and more likely to use the information on religiosity and cultural similarity/dissimilarity. And sixth, strong Democrats and strong Republicans were similar in their weighting of different types of similarity and dissimilarity.

This study was expected to set a foundation in understanding how individuals utilize different pieces of information in forming OIST and in constructing the treatment that will be used for the manipulation of OIST in the upcoming studies. Conjoint analysis used in this experiment successfully analyzed the independent effects of each information piece on the formation of interpersonal social trust. However, this statistical analysis lacks some external validity as this method has limitations in providing insights on interaction effects between information pieces. For example, a significant interaction effect between the information on political similarity and cultural similarity may exist to amplify the chance of selecting someone who is both politically and culturally similar. Or the chance of being selected may be worsened if someone is culturally dissimilar while politically

similar if the interaction effect between the two information appears to be negative. Yet, this study is sufficient to fulfill its goals stated earlier in the chapter. Based on the result presented above, the OIST manipulation strategy will attempt to enhance the sense of similarity or dissimilarity with a stranger by providing a profile that includes information that had the most significant impacts on the construction of OIST. Furthermore, profiles of the stranger will include a different set of information pieces, or in a different order, based on the strength of the party identification the trustor holds.

#### **4.2 Study 2b. Manipulation of Online Interpersonal Social Trust (OIST)**

The second goal of Study 2 is to test if online interpersonal social trust (OIST) can be manipulated experimentally. Some previous studies have attempted to manipulate levels of social trust in experimental settings. For example, Mutz (2005) manipulated generalized social trust, which was described as “truly generalized feelings about humanity, and not a measure of pro-American sentiment, pro-business sentiment, or pro- any particular group or entity” (p. 401), by manipulating a short excerpt the participants read. Yet, it is often difficult to successfully manipulate particularized social trust in experimental settings, as the construction and updates of particularized social trust are subject to gradual interactions between two people (Lenard & Miller, 2018). Building on the results of Study 2a, Study 2b attempts to manipulate the level of OIST by utilizing two different manipulation strategies: 1) enhancing the sense of similarity or dissimilarity between oneself and one’s online partner using *profiles of the partner*, and 2) providing shared experiences through a *short flashcard exercise*.

#### **Methods**

Similar to Study 2a’s experiment, participants first answered a series of questions about themselves, and then they were randomly partnered up with someone from the pool of other participants (“partner”). Yet, in reality, the partner was a simulated player. As the first manipulation strategy of this experiment, participants were provided with some information about the partner that tells whether they were similar or different in eight different areas—age group, gender, race, party identification, religion, cultural preferences, policy preferences, and religiosity—in the form of a profile. Then, the participants participated in a short flashcard exercise with the partner by answering 13 simple questions on their preferences (e.g., iPhone vs. Android, cat vs. dog) or opinions (e.g., Do you think society is getting better?). As a part of the second manipulation strategy, I

provided how many questions they matched with the partner to enhance the sense of similarity or dissimilarity through sharing an experience. After these two treatments, participants answered the questions measuring the three types of social trust—OIST in the partner, trust in online friends, and trust in the general public online. By comparing how the levels of different social trust have changed before and after the treatments, the effects of each manipulation strategy on the development and expression of social trust were examined.

***Treatment 1—Partner Profile***

Results of Study 2a demonstrated that all eight information cues had significant effects but with different weights. In particular, the weights political moderates and strong partisans of both parties placed on each cue differed. To maximize the sense of similarity/dissimilarity participants feel toward the partner, I created different profiles with different ordering of information cues—with the information cue with greatest weight on the top to the cue with least weight on the bottom—for political moderates and strong partisans (see Table 4.3 for the specific ordering of information).

Table 4.3: Ordering of Information Cues

<b>Order</b>	<b>Moderate Partisans</b>	<b>Strong Partisans</b>
1	Cultural Preferences	Policy Preferences
2	Religiosity	Party ID
3	Policy Preferences	Cultural Preferences
4	Age	Religiosity
5	Religion	Age
6	Race	Religion
7	Party ID	Gender
8	Gender	Race

This experiment uses the similarity/dissimilarity projected through the partner’s profile as one of the manipulation strategies of OIST. Therefore, there are two conditions in this treatment—profile indicating similarity and that indicating dissimilarity.

Theoretically, keeping all eight information to project similarity or dissimilarity can create the strongest sense of similarity or dissimilarity toward the partner. However, there exists the issue that participants would not believe that they are playing with a real person if they are too similar



or dissimilar with the person randomly partnered up. It is possible that a lack of believability may make participants react differently than they would in real situations with real people. Therefore, to find the profile that is both effective and believable in creating the sense of similarity/dissimilarity, I created three types of profiles varying in the number of the information displayed and the indicators of similarity/dissimilarity.

The first type of profile included all eight information cues, and these cues were all either *same as yours/ highly similar (90%-100% match)* or *different from yours/highly dissimilar (0%-10% match)*. The second type also included all eight information cues. However, among them, five cues with the strongest effects in creating OIST projected similarity/dissimilarity, while the other three projected the opposite to provide some variance in the profile. Lastly, the third type included only five information cues with the strongest effects in creating OIST, and all of them projected similarity or dissimilarity uniformly.

In sum, there were 12 different profiles used in this experiment—2 (ordering of information cues by participant's strength of partisanship: moderate partisan order vs. strong partisan order) x 2 (partner profile similarity: similar vs. dissimilar) x 3 (type of profile: 8 cues with unified similarity/dissimilarity vs. 8 cues with mixed similarity/dissimilarity vs. 5 cues with unified similarity/dissimilarity). Figure 4.6 displays the six profiles used for politically moderate partisan participants, and Figure 4.7 displays the six profiles for strong partisan participants. Participants were first grouped by their strength of partisanship (asked as a part of the questionnaire before the treatment, which can be found in Appendix E), and then they were randomized into one of the six conditions varying in the similarity and the type of partner's profile.

<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Age:</b> Within 2-year age difference  <b>Religion:</b> Same as yours  <b>Race:</b> Same as yours  <b>Party ID:</b> Same as yours  <b>Gender:</b> Same as yours</p>	<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Age:</b> Over 20-year age difference  <b>Religion:</b> Different from yours  <b>Race:</b> Different from yours  <b>Party ID:</b> Different from yours  <b>Gender:</b> Different from yours</p>
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(a) Type 1 Profile

<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Age:</b> Within 2-year age difference  <b>Religion:</b> Same as yours  <b>Race:</b> Different from yours  <b>Party ID:</b> Slightly different from yours  <b>Gender:</b> Different from yours</p>	<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Age:</b> Over 20-year age difference  <b>Religion:</b> Different from yours  <b>Race:</b> Same as yours  <b>Party ID:</b> Same as yours  <b>Gender:</b> Same as yours</p>
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(b) Type 2 Profile

<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses)  <b>Age:</b> Within 2-year age difference  <b>Religion:</b> Same as yours</p>	<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses)  <b>Age:</b> Over 20-year age difference  <b>Religion:</b> Different from yours</p>
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(c) Type 3 Profile

Figure 4.6: Treatment 1 Partner Profiles (Moderate Partisan Participants)

<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Party ID:</b> Same as yours <b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Age:</b> Within 2-year age difference <b>Religion:</b> Same as yours <b>Gender:</b> Same as yours <b>Race:</b> Same as yours</p>	<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Party ID:</b> Different from yours <b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Age:</b> Over 20-year age difference <b>Religion:</b> Different from yours <b>Gender:</b> Different from yours <b>Race:</b> Different from yours</p>
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(a) Type 1 Profile

<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Party ID:</b> Same as yours <b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Age:</b> Within 2-year age difference <b>Religion:</b> Different from yours <b>Gender:</b> Different from yours <b>Race:</b> Different from yours</p>	<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Party ID:</b> Different from yours <b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Age:</b> Over 20-year age difference <b>Religion:</b> Same as yours <b>Gender:</b> Same as yours <b>Race:</b> Same as yours</p>
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(b) Type 2 Profile

<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Party ID:</b> Same as yours <b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Similar (Same on 85-100% of the responses) <b>Age:</b> Within 2-year age difference</p>	<p>Your Partner's Profile Player ID: 789276</p> <p><b>Policy Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Party ID:</b> Different from yours <b>Cultural Preferences:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Religiosity:</b> Highly Dissimilar (Same on 0-15% of the responses) <b>Age:</b> Over 20-year age difference</p>
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(c) Type 3 Profile

Figure 4.7: Treatment 1 Partner Profiles (Strong Partisan Participants)

### ***Treatment 2—Flashcard Exercise Similarity***

Existing literature on social trust argues that relationships built through interpersonal interactions and shared experiences with the trustee are important bases in forming social trust in a specific trustee (Lenard & Miller, 2018). Even though it is difficult to provide continuous and controlled interactions between a trustor and trustee in experimental settings, I hypothesized that sharing the same experience and confirming how similarly or dissimilarly one behaved in the experience would function as the personal interaction with the trustee and thus create differences in OIST, ultimately.

The *flashcard exercise* was composed of 13 questions that asked about one's preferences and opinions on a variety of issues ranging from those that might appear in ice-breaking games (e.g., iPhone vs. Android, cat vs. dog) to those asking for opinions on more serious issues (e.g., Do you think America's economy will do better this year compared to last year? Do you think society is getting better?). Questions clearly stated that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions to indicate that it is important to answer with the participant's intuition. 10 seconds were given to answer each question, and participants could move on to the next question after 3-4 seconds if they made a choice (see Appendix E for the questions used for the flashcard exercise).

Once the Flashcard questions were all answered, participants saw how many questions they matched with the partner (see Figure 4.8 for the images used to display the flashcard exercise result). Participants who were assigned to the high trust condition ("Similar exercise result" condition) saw that they matched with their partner in 12 questions out of 13 questions. Their score was indicated to be in the 98th percentile, meaning that only 2 out of 100 randomly selected pairs of partners from a nationally representative group of U.S. adults would score at or above their similarity score. On the other hand, participants in the low trust condition ("Dissimilar exercise result" condition) saw that they only matched in one question out of 13 questions, resulting in their score being in the 2nd percentile that only 2 out of 100 randomly selected pairs of partners from a nationally representative group of U.S. adults would score at or below their similarity score.

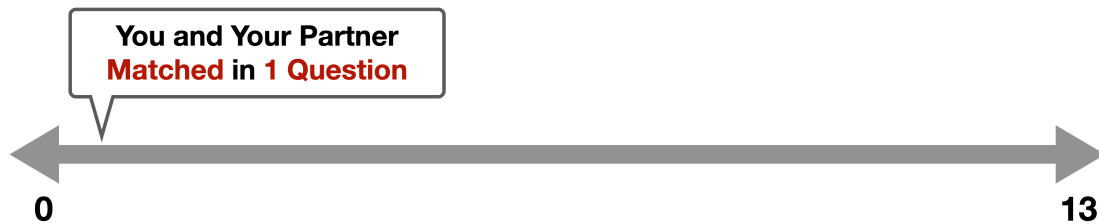
You are **QUITE SIMILAR** with your partner!



Your and your partner **scored 12/13** in our similarity questionnaire. This score is in the **98th percentile**. **Only 2 out of 100** randomly selected pairs of partners from a nationally representative group of US adults would **score at or above** your similarity score.

(a) Similar Flashcard Exercise Result Condition

You are **QUITE DIFFERENT** from your partner!



Your and your partner **scored 1/13** in our similarity questionnaire. This score is in the **2nd percentile**. **Only 2 out of 100** randomly selected pairs of partners from a nationally representative group of US adults would **score at or below** your similarity score.

(b) Dissimilar Flashcard Exercise Result Condition

Figure 4.8: Treatment 2 Flashcard Exercise Result

### ***Measurement of Response Variables***

To investigate how two treatments influence OIST, the levels of different types of social trust and the interest in the partner were measured. Trust in the members of participants' online social networks and trust in the general public online were measured before and after the treatments, and OIST in the partner was measured after the treatments. The members of participants' online social networks referred to as "the people you [the respondent] consider *online friends*, such as your Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter friends," and the general public one interacts online referred to as "the people you interact with online more generally—that is online interactions with people that you do not know well or consider friends."

The three types of social trust were measured with standard social trust questions in a 7-point-scale asking how much one agrees or disagrees with the following statements:

1. **[My current Partner/most of my online friends/most of people online]** is/are trustworthy.
2. I can't be too careful in dealing with **[my current Partner/my online friends/people online]**.
3. **[My current Partner/most of my online friends/most of people online]** would try to take advantage of me if he/she/they got a chance.
4. Most of the time, **[my current Partner/my online friends/people online]** mostly look out for himself/herself/themselves.
5. When he/she/they face temptations, **[my current Partner/my online friends/people online]** are not very honest.

With participants' answers, I ran an EFA to construct indices for the different types of social trusts. Based on the eigenvalues, the cumulative variance explained, and the scree plot, I could group five different five-questions-sets measuring two pre-treatment social trusts and three post-treatment social trusts as intended. Every question on pre-treatment social trusts had factor loadings higher than 0.7, and every question on post-treatment social trusts had factor loadings higher than 0.6. Results on factor loadings suggest that each question had strong influences on each type of social trust measured. Therefore, I created variables for each type of social trust by averaging the participants' answers to the five questions.

In addition to the direct measurement of OIST, the questions asking about the interest of participants to do certain actions with the partner were also included. The measurement asked the participants' interest in doing the following four different actions on a 7-point-scale ranging from 1 (completely not interested) to 7 (completely interested):

1. Reading news articles shared by your current Partner.
2. Accepting friend requests from your current Partner on social media platforms.
3. Having a conversation on political issues with your current Partner.
4. Having a conversation on cultural topics (e.g., food, music, movie) with your current Partner.

Similar to the EFA done with the questions measuring different social trusts, I ran EFA with the questions measuring the interest in the partner. All four questions had factor loadings higher than 0.5 and varied together to be grouped as one variable measuring the interest in the partner. I averaged the answers to the four questions to create a variable on the participant's interest to do certain actions with the partner.

Lastly, at the end of the survey, I asked participants how believable the partner was on a 7-point-scale, ranging from 1 (highly unbelievable) to 7 (highly believable). The believability scale of each profile type was calculated as follows:

$$\text{believability} = \frac{\text{number of participants answered 4 through 7}}{\text{total number of participants}}$$

## Results

1,312 participants, who are all Americans over 18 years old, were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk for this experiment. 338 participants were assigned to Case1, 321 to Case 2, 317 to Case 3, and 336 to Case 4. Regarding the type of profile, 467 participants were assigned to the first type with 8 unified similarity/dissimilarity cues, 457 were assigned to the second type with 8 mixed similarity/dissimilarity cues, and 388 to the third type with 5 unified similarity/dissimilarity cues.

As this experiment aims to assess the effect of the manipulation strategies used on one's level of OIST in the Partner, the data is mainly analyzed with multiple t-tests and generalized linear models to examine 1) how the manipulation changed the level of OIST based on the cases assigned, and 2) if the manipulation strategies only influenced the level of OIST and by how much. Furthermore,

once the effect of the partner profile similarity is confirmed, I placed the experiment participants into three subgroups based on the type of profile they saw. With each subgroup, I compared the effect of each treatment to determine the profile that produces the most significant change in the level of OIST. Additionally, the believability scale was compared across the subgroups to examine any differences in how participants perceived the partner depending on the information they received.

### ***Participant Sample and Limitations***

As the participants were all randomly assigned to one of the four cases and one of the three profile types, this section provides an overview of the whole participant sample (see Table 4.4).

45.1% of participants were male and 53.9% were female, close to the actual gender breakdown of the adult U.S. population. Racially, 76.2% of the participants were white, followed by 7.7% Asian, 7.2% Black or African American, about 4.0% Hispanic or Latino, and 4.9% other and mixed races, again largely in line with the U.S. population composition, with the exception of the Hispanic/Latino population. Similar to many Amazon Mechanical Turk samples, this survey sample was generally more educated than the average U.S. population: 9.2% of the participants had high school degree or less; 64.4% had some or completed an associate's or bachelor's degree; 26.1% had some or completed a graduate degree.

Regarding party affiliation, 39.4% of the participants were affiliated with the Democratic party (17.1% strong Democrat; 24.1% Democrat), 20.6% were affiliated with the Republican party (5.4% strong Republican; 13.8% Republican), and 40.0% identified themselves as Independents (12.7% Independent but lean Democrat; 16.4% Independent; 10.5% independent but lean Republican). A similar composition was observed in participants' political ideology: 39.4% liberals, 20.8% conservatives, and 39.8% moderates. Similar to other Mechanical Turk samples, people who identified themselves as Democrats were slightly overrepresented than the general U.S. population but not to a concerning level.

Similar to other samples recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk, there are several areas in which this experiment's participants are not fully representative of the U.S. population. However, possible biases due to some unrepresentativeness of the participants are expected to have been mitigated through random assignment of the treatments.



Table 4.4: Demographic Summary of the Study 2b Experiment Participants (n=1,312)

	Frequency	%
Male	591	45.1%
Female	707	53.9%
Nonbinary/Others	14	1.0%
White	1000	76.2%
Black/African American	95	7.2%
Asian	101	7.7%
Hispanic/Latino	52	4.0%
Mixed Race/Others	64	4.9%
High school degree or less	121	9.2%
Some college education with no degree	279	21.3%
Completed an associate's or bachelor's degree	566	43.1%
Some graduate education with no degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	56	4.3%
Have a graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	286	21.8%
Others	4	0.3%
Strong Democrat	224	17.1%
Democrat	316	24.1%
Independent but Lean Democrat	167	12.7%
Independent	215	16.4%
Independent but Lean Republican	138	10.5%
Republican	181	13.8%
Strong Republican	71	5.4%
Very Liberal	177	13.5%
Liberal	367	28.0%
Moderate but Lean Liberal	160	12.2%
Moderate	210	16.0%
Moderate but Lean Conservative	130	9.9%
Conservative	187	14.2%
Very Conservative	81	6.2%

### ***Effects on Different Types of Social Trust***

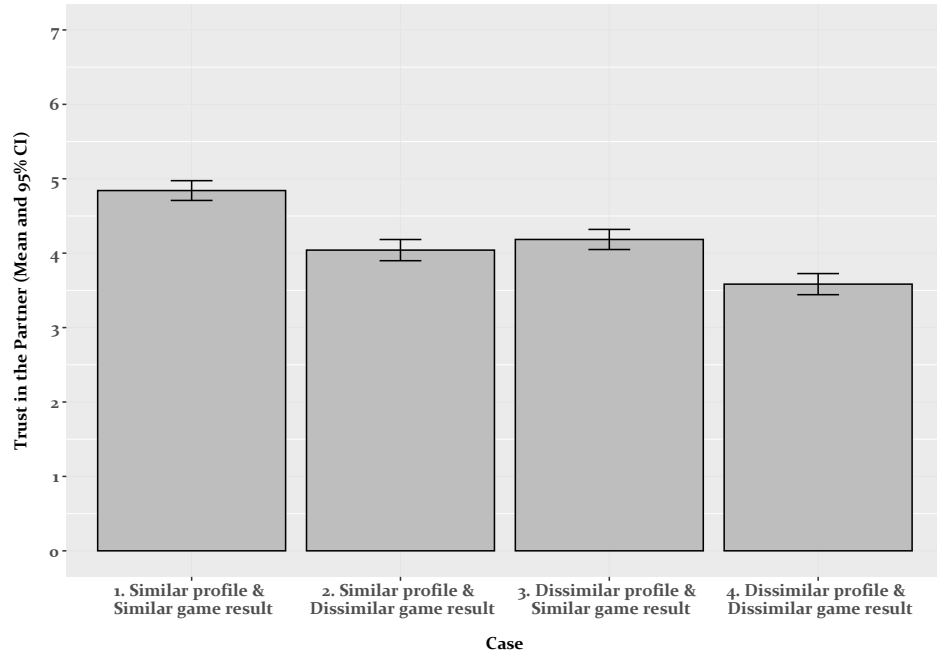
This manipulation strategy was specifically targeted to influence the level of OIST in the partner without changing the levels of trust in online friends and that in the general public online.

To confirm the effect of the two treatments, I ran a series of between-group t-tests comparing the mean of different social trusts. For this analysis, participants were grouped by the assigned similarity/dissimilarity cases as follows: Case 1 (similar profile + similar exercise result), Case 2 (similar profile + dissimilar exercise result), Case 3 (dissimilar profile + similar exercise result), and Case 4 (dissimilar profile + dissimilar exercise result).

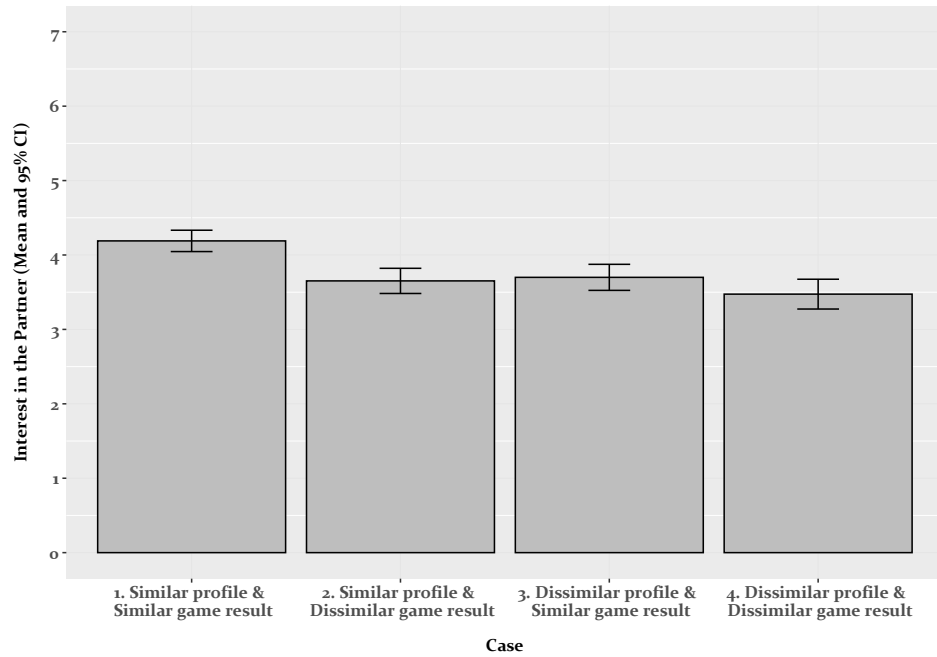
First, averaged levels of OIST were compared across cases to examine if there are any significant differences observed. As Figure 4.9 displays, the participants who were assigned to Case 1, in which the partner had a highly similar profile with the participant and answered very similarly to the flashcard questions, exhibited both the highest level of trust in the partner ( $M = 4.841, SD = 1.242$ ) and the highest interests in doing the four activities asked ( $M = 4.189, SD = 1.341$ ). Both levels of OIST ( $t(657) = 8.09, p < .001$  when compared with Case 2;  $t(653) = 6.82, p < .001$  when compared with Case 3;  $t(672) = 12.72, p < .001$  when compared with Case 4) and interest ( $t(657) = 4.79, p < .001$  when compared with Case 2;  $t(653) = 4.28, p < .001$  when compared with Case 3;  $t(672) = 5.72, p < .001$  when compared with Case 4) in the partner were significantly higher than those of the three other cases.

On the other hand, the participants assigned to Case 4, in which the dissimilar profile of the partner and the low similarity score in the flashcard exercise were provided, exhibited both the lowest level of trust ( $M = 3.584, SD = 1.323$ ) and the lowest level of interests ( $M = 3.474, SD = 1.866$ ) in the partner. When compared with the mixed similarity cases—either similar profile with dissimilar flashcard exercise result or dissimilar profile with similar flashcard exercise result—the low trust condition elicited a significantly lower level of OIST in the partner ( $t(655) = 4.47, p < .001$  when compared with Case 2;  $t(651) = 6.01, p < .001$  when compared with Case 3). The participants of the low trust condition demonstrated statistically lower interest in the partner than those of Case 3 ( $t(651) = 1.66, p < .05$ ) but not statistically significant difference from those of Case 2 ( $t(655) = 1.33, p = .092$ ).

Between the participants who were exposed to the mixed-similarity-condition cases, there were no significant differences observed between the participants assigned to Case 2 and 3 regarding both levels of OIST ( $t(636) = 1.43, p = .076$ ) and interests in the partner ( $t(636) = 0.39, p = .35$ ).



(a) OIST in the Partner



(b) Interest in the Partner

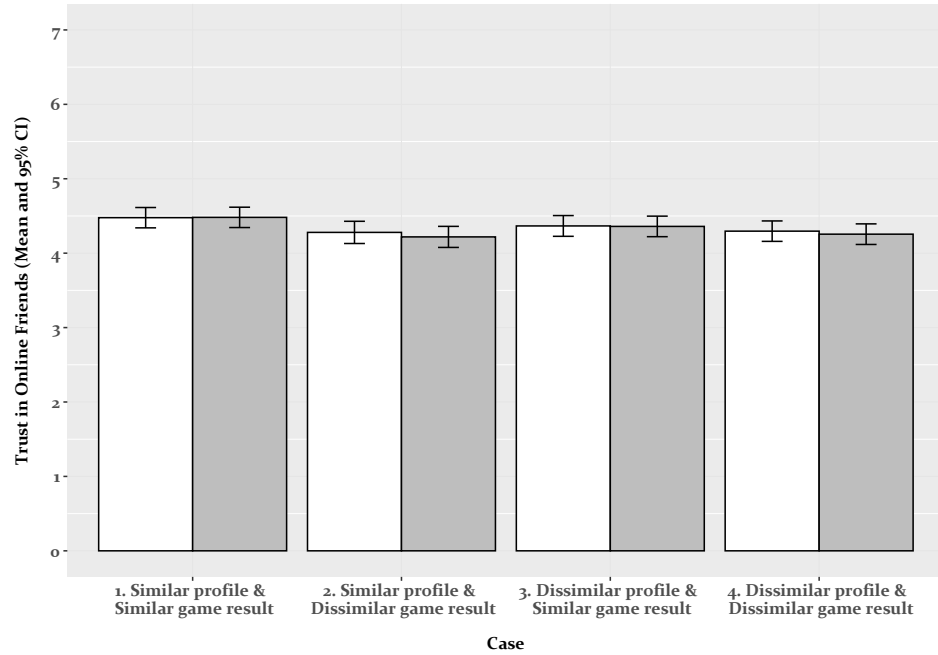
**Note:** Error bars indicate a 95% confidence interval.

Figure 4.9: Level of OIST and Interest in the Partner by Similarity/Dissimilarity Cases

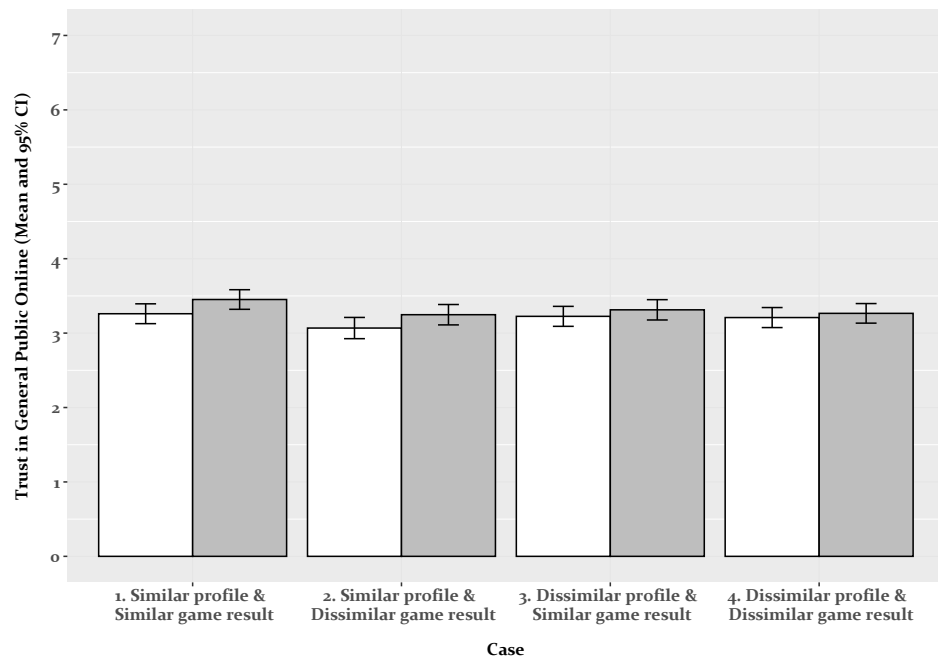
These results demonstrate that the manipulation strategies successfully altered the participant's level of OIST and interest in the partner as intended. However, it is necessary to also show that other forms of social trust were not manipulated to use this manipulation strategy for Study 3. To isolate the effect of the manipulation strategies on OIST, I estimated the differences in levels of social trust in the participant's online network and the general public in the online sphere before and after the treatments, and across the four cases.

Based on a series of between-group t-tests comparing the means of trust in participants' online friends before and after the treatments, there were no differences found in all four cases. In the case of trust in the general public online, no differences between pre- and post-treatments were detected in Case 3 and 4, while slight differences were detected in Case 1 ( $t(674) = 2.01, p = .02$ ) and 2 ( $t(640) = 1.79, p = .037$ ). Yet, it is difficult to conclude that they are substantively significant differences, as the sizes of the differences are less than 0.2 (see panel (b) of Figure 4.10). These t-test results demonstrate that the two treatments did not have significant effects on the two other forms of social trust that were not intended for manipulation. Figure 4.10, once more, exhibits that OIST manipulation strategies did not alter participants' trust in both online friends and the general public online.

I also examined if there were any significant differences in the levels of trust in online friends and the general public online across the four case subgroups. Based on the one-way ANOVA, there were no statistically significant differences found in trust in the general public online measured before ( $F(3, 1308) = 1.477, p = .22$ ) and after ( $F(3, 1308) = 1.869, p = .13$ ) the treatments. In the case of trust in the participants' online network measured, no differences were found among the pre-treatment trust levels ( $F(3, 1308) = 1.609, p = .19$ ). Statistically significant differences in the level of social trust in the participants' online network after the treatments were found between the participants assigned to Case 1 and 2 ( $t(657) = 2.63, p = .004$ ), and between those assigned to Case 1 and 4 ( $t(672) = 2.28, p = .011$ ). Yet, no normatively significant differences were found as Figure 4.10 illustrates.



(a) Trust in Online Friends



(b) Trust in General Public Online

**Note a:** For both figures (a) and (b), the white bars indicate pre-treatment trust and the gray bars indicate post-treatment trust.

**Note b:** Error bars indicate a 95% confidence interval.

Figure 4.10: Level of Trust in Online Friends and General Public Online by Similarity/Dissimilarity Cases

The results and analyses of the t-tests, ANOVA, and bar graphs presented above indicate that the combination of the two manipulation strategies successfully altered participants' OIST on the partner. By running the generalized linear model, having OIST as the response variable and the two manipulation strategies as the independent variables, the effect of each manipulation strategy was further examined and quantified (see Table 4.5).

The result of the generalized linear model demonstrates that both partner's profile and flashcard exercise had statistically significant positive effects on OIST in the partner as they projected similarity between the participant and the partner. On the other hand, the two treatments did not have statistically significant effects on eliciting interest in the partner. The effect sizes of both treatments for eliciting interest in the partner were also smaller than those for OIST.

Table 4.5: Effect of OIST Manipulation Strategies on OIST and Interest in the Partner

	(1)	(2)
	OIST in the Partner	Interest in the Partner
(Intercept)	3.584*** (0.069)	3.474*** (0.087)
Profile	0.457*** (0.099)	0.178 (0.124)
Flashcard Result	0.600*** (0.100)	0.226 (0.125)
Profile:Flashcard Result	0.200 (0.141)	0.312 (0.176)
Observations	1,312	1,312
R <sup>2</sup>	0.114	0.028
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.112	0.025
Residual Std. Error (df = 1308)	1.272	1.594
F Statistic (df = 3; 1308)	56.264***	12.421***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Profile* refers to the similarity of the partner's profile with the participant. This variable was coded as 0 = Dissimilar profile, 1 = Similar profile.

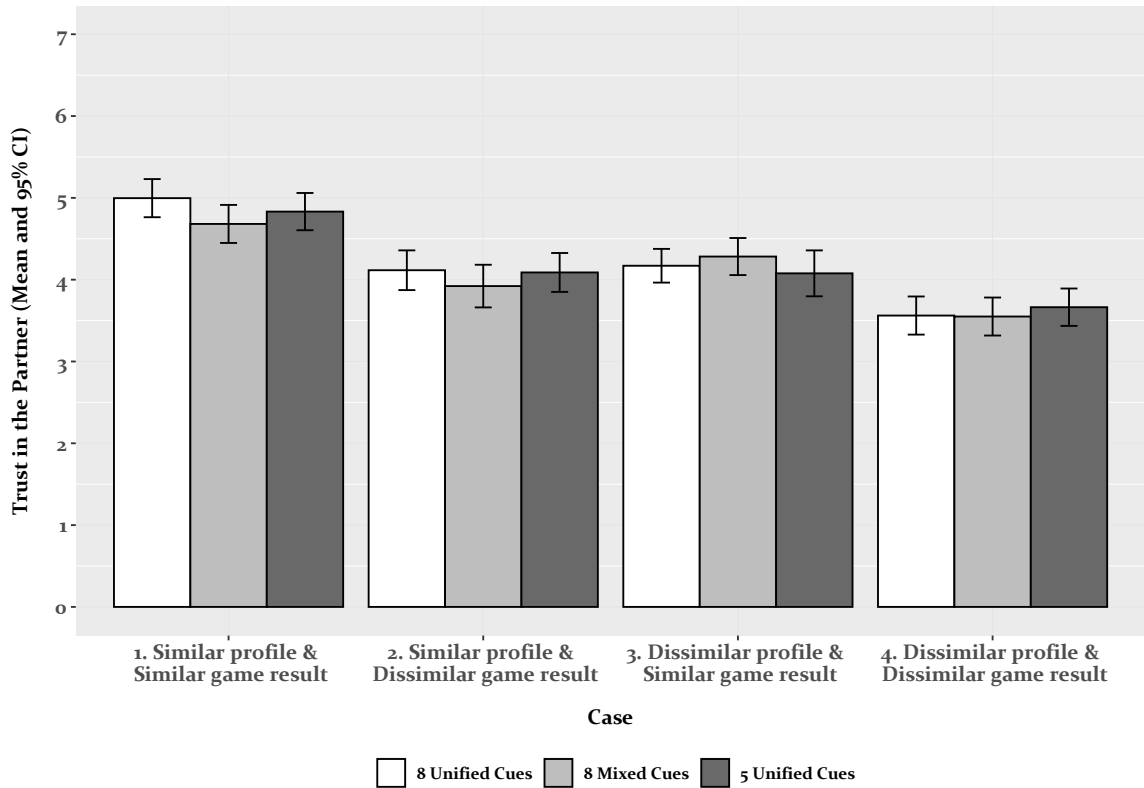
**Note c:** *Flashcard result* refers to how similarly the participant and the partner answered to the Flashcard exercise. This variable was coded as 0 = Dissimilar result, 1 = Similar result.

Looking more specifically into effect sizes, the similarity/dissimilarity in the results of the flashcard exercise had a stronger influence on OIST in comparison to the similarity/dissimilarity in the partner's profile. This resonates with the previous studies that the construction of interpersonal trust is a continual process in which it gets updated through interactions with the other person.

### ***Effects on OIST by the Type of Profile Displayed***

As the effects of the treatments on OIST were confirmed with the analyses on the whole participant sample, the effectiveness and believability of each type of profile were examined to determine the profile type that will be used to manipulate participant's OIST in Study 3.

Figure 4.11 displays the levels of OIST in the partner by the type of profile and by the four similarity/dissimilarity cases. Generally, all three participant subgroups by the profile type followed the pattern observed in the previous section—within each subgroup by the profile type, the highest level of OIST was observed from Case 1, in which both treatments displayed similarity with the partner, and the lowest level of OIST was observed from Case 4, in which both treatments displayed dissimilarity. However, across the four cases, there were no statistical differences found among the profile type subgroups in general. The only significant difference was observed between the profile type 1 (8 unified information cues) and type 2 (8 mixed information cues) when both treatments projected similarity with the partner ( $t(224) = 1.89, p = .030$ ).



**Note a:** Error bars indicate a 95% confidence interval.

Figure 4.11: OIST in the Partner by Case and Profile Type

In order to examine a more quantified effect of each treatment within each profile type subgroup, I ran a series of generalized linear models having the level of OIST as the response variable and the two manipulation strategies as the independent variables. Table 4.6 displays that both treatments have statistically significant effects in all three profile types. The effect of profile similarity was the largest in profile type 1 by 0.554, while the effect of the flashcard exercise result similarity was the largest in profile type 2 by 0.733. As the OIST manipulation strategy is a combination of two strategies, profile type 1 seems to be the most effective strategy to use in Study 3.



Table 4.6: Effect of OIST Manipulation Strategies on OIST by Profile Type

	Type 1 8 Unified Cues	Type 2 8 Mixed Cues	Type 3 5 Unified Cues
(Intercept)	3.562*** (0.114)	3.550*** (0.116)	3.664*** (0.134)
Profile	0.554*** (0.164)	0.372* (0.169)	0.425* (0.186)
Flashcard Result	0.609*** (0.167)	0.733*** (0.167)	0.414* (0.187)
Profile:Flashcard Result	0.272 (0.236)	0.026 (0.241)	0.330 (0.256)
Observations	467	457	388
R <sup>2</sup>	0.145	0.098	0.107
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.139	0.092	0.100
Residual Std. Error	1.271 (df = 463)	1.287 (df = 453)	1.257 (df = 384)
F Statistic	26.155*** (df = 3; 463)	16.319*** (df = 3; 453)	15.316*** (df = 3; 384)

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Profile* refers to the similarity of the partner's profile with the participant. This variable was coded as 0 = Dissimilar profile, 1 = Similar profile.

**Note c:** *Flashcard result* refers to how similarly the participant and the partner answered to the Flashcard exercise. This variable was coded as 0 = Dissimilar result, 1 = Similar result.

Lastly, I checked the effect of the believability of the partner varied by profile type and if it influenced treatment effects as well. Table 4.7 demonstrates that participants who believed the partner to be real showed a statistically significant higher level of OIST in the partner.

When believability is included in the generalized linear model as an independent variable, the effects of both profile similarity and flashcard exercise get slightly weakened in comparison to the model without, in general. The two manipulation strategies, yet, appeared effective no matter how participants believed the partner to be real, except for the flashcard exercise when profile type 3 was used. Furthermore, for each profile type, the believability scale was 0.589, 0.632, and 0.642 respectively, displaying not much difference across the subgroups.

Despite the effectiveness of the treatments across the type of profile, this linear model further supports the combination of profile type 1 and flashcard exercise to be the most effective OIST manipulation strategy; the magnitude and statistical significance of both treatment effects did not change much, and the effect size of profile similarity even increased from 0.554 to 0.650.

Table 4.7: Effect of OIST Manipulation Strategies on OIST by Profile Type

	Type 1 8 Unified Cues	Type 2 8 Mixed Cues	Type 3 5 Unified Cues
(Intercept)	2.834*** (0.160)	2.681*** (0.165)	2.856*** (0.179)
Profile	0.650*** (0.158)	0.332* (0.161)	0.385* (0.177)
Flashcard Result	0.588*** (0.161)	0.681*** (0.159)	0.307 (0.179)
Believability	0.188*** (0.030)	0.230*** (0.033)	0.225*** (0.035)
Profile:Flashcard Result	0.098 (0.228)	-0.068 (0.230)	0.248 (0.244)
Observations	467	457	388
R <sup>2</sup>	0.211	0.187	0.195
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.204	0.180	0.186
Residual Std. Error	1.222 (df = 462)	1.223 (df = 452)	1.196 (df = 383)
F Statistic	30.863*** (df = 4; 462)	25.941*** (df = 4; 452)	23.124*** (df = 4; 383)

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Profile* refers to the similarity of the partner's profile with the participant. This variable was coded as 0 = Dissimilar profile, 1 = Similar profile.

**Note c:** *Flashcard result* refers to how similarly the participant and the partner answered to the Flashcard exercise. This variable was coded as 0 = Dissimilar result, 1 = Similar result.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Study 2b aimed to construct a method that manipulates the level of OIST in an experimental setting. Based on the theories and previous studies on interpersonal social trust, I combined two different manipulation strategies. To construct the sense of similarity/dissimilarity, the first strategy

provided a profile about the partner that comprises eight different information pieces. Then a short flashcard exercise was provided to establish a shared experience between a participant and a partner. By showing how similarly or dissimilarly they answered during the exercise further enhanced the sense of similarity or dissimilarity. These two manipulation strategies successfully changed the level of OIST without influencing other social trusts, such as trust in one's online friends and the general public online. Different types of profiles were tested to select the most believable one with the most significant effect. Based on generalized linear models, Study 3 will use the combination of profile type 1 and flashcard exercise to manipulate OIST, which will be one of the treatments of the experiment.

# 5

## Study 3

### The Influence of Online Personalized Social Trust and News Sharing on Political Trust

To answer the central research question and test the hypotheses of this dissertation, this study used a 3 (OIST: low OIST vs. high OIST vs. non-existence) by 2 (tone of the treatment article: positive assessment of the government action vs. negative assessment of the government action) design. This experiment was largely composed of three steps: the first step manipulated the level of OIST in the partner (first treatment); the second exposed the participant to a treatment article (supposedly) shared by the partner (second treatment); and the last measured the response variables.

#### Methods

##### *Step 1– Manipulation of OIST in the Partner*

Study 2b demonstrated that it is possible to experimentally manipulate one's level of OIST in a stranger. This study used the same experiment treatments—partner profile and flashcard exercise—to manipulate the participants' level of OIST in the randomly assigned partner.

Unlike Study 2b, this experiment manipulated participants to have either a *high level of OIST*—partner profile projecting similarity with similar flashcard exercise result—or a *low level of OIST*—partner profile projecting dissimilarity with dissimilar flashcard exercise result. Among the four cases with different levels, these two cases exhibited the highest and lowest levels of OIST, best fitting the purpose of the first treatment. In addition to the two conditions, there was a control group in which participants read the article without any partner (*non-existent* of OIST) to represent a

more traditional way of reading news articles. In all cases, the participants' partners were simulated confederates (i.e., their profiles are created by the investigator).

### ***Step 2—Sharing of a News Article***

After the manipulation of OIST in the partner, participants were told that they were going to have more direct interactions with their partner by sharing news articles with them. They were told that the participant and his/her partner will each be given a different set of six articles on various issues and asked to select one article to share with the other. When sharing the article, participants were told to write a short impression about the article or a message to the partner that will be shared with the article. To minimize any unintended effects (e.g., priming political attitudes), the set of six articles shared with the actual participants were on non-political issues, such as movies and music (see Appendix G for the non-treatment articles). After sending their selection to their partner, participants received an article shared by their partner that functioned as the second treatment of this experiment. The article was shared with an endorsement message from the partner: “Interesting article to read. I found this article to deliver fair and reasonable points and arguments.”

The treatment article framed the government action in either a *positive* (i.e., the federal government working successfully to solve a public problem) or *negative* light (i.e., the federal government working unsuccessfully to solve a public problem). Based on my analyses of the structure and measurement of political trust in Study 1, the treatment articles were about how the Biden administration and the current Congress are working together on a bill to handle a particular issue. Given that Study 1 also suggested that political trust is related to the handling of issues that respondents consider important, the articles focused on issues of concern to participants. I based this issue selection on responses from Study 2a and 2b, where I asked individuals to select the three most important problems the United States is facing today. I found that 80 percent of the participants selected the economy, public health (including COVID-19), and/or race relations as the most important issue facing the nation. While there were some partisan differences in the issues selected, one or more of these three issues were selected by a majority of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Based on this analysis, I prepared two articles on each of these issues—one depicting the government dealing with each issue efficiently and the other one depicting the government action as inefficient.

I used the following process to assign each participant an article they would be interested in: During the OIST manipulation phase of the experiment (the complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix F), they were asked, “Which of the following do you think are the three most important problems the United States is facing today?” Depending on their answers to the question, they were matched with one of six articles, which would contain a topic of their interest. If a participant selected one or more of the three issues (the economy, public health, and race relations), the participant was randomly assigned to one of the issues selected. If a participant did not select any of the three issues, he or she was asked, “Previous public survey results showed that the American public considers the economy, public health, and race relations are the three most important problems the United States is facing today. Among these three, which one do you consider to be the most imminent problem?” (also asked during the OIST manipulation phase of the experiment) Based on the participant’s selection, the participant was randomly assigned to either a positively framed or negatively framed article about the government handling the selected issue. After receiving the article from their partner, participants could spend as much time (which was measured) as they chose to read it.

To minimize any unexpected effects due to the differences between the articles, the structure, length, content, and language of the articles were kept as identical as possible (see Appendix H for the treatment articles). Any indicators of the publisher or the author were removed to isolate the effect of OIST in the partner. Articles were composed of two parts. The first part, composed of three paragraphs, provided fundamental information about the bill: purpose, background, and provisions—both positive and negative articles about the government shared this part. The second part of the articles introduced various assessments by the experts. This part was mainly crafted to deliver the tone of the article making positive or negative assessments of the government action. Information used in the treatment articles was extracted from published articles—all of the information, including quotes and statistics, was factually accurate.

### ***Step 3—Measurement of the Response and Other Variables***

This study investigates the main research question and tests the hypotheses by measuring three different response variables: 1) the level of political trust, 2) the level of OIST in the partner, and 3) reactions to the treatment article.

Political trust was measured through the questions and scales developed from Study 1. This study's focus is on the trust in the Presidency/President Biden and the Congress/current Congress members. But trust in the Supreme Court/current Supreme Court members, trust in the overall national election process/2020 elections, and trust in the overall democratic system were also measured; both to mask the variables of interest and to assess whether changes in trust extend beyond the specific people/institutions mentioned in the articles. Political trust was measured twice—both in Steps 1 and 3, allowing for both within- and between-subjects assessments to test H4 and H5.

The second response variable, OIST in the partner, was measured through the same scale used in Study 2b. As with political trust measurement, OIST in the partner was measured in both Steps 1 and 3. The initial measure of OIST was used for assessing the predictions in H1 through H6. Both pre- and post-treatment measures of OIST are used for within-subject and between-subject assessments of H7 and H8.

The last response variables focus on how participants react to news articles shared by their partners of varying levels of OIST. These will include time spent reading (H1), as well as attitudinal and behavioral responses (H2, H3) and intent to share within their other social networks (H6).

In addition, other questions on partisanship, article recall, and demographics, as well as several questions intended to disguise the intent of the study, were included in Step 3 (full questionnaire can be found in Appendix F).

## **Results**

794 participants, who are all Americans over 18 years old, participated in this experiment through Amazon Mechanical Turk for this experiment.

As this experiment aims to assess the effects of OIST and attention to the news in the partner on one's level of various political trusts, the data was mainly analyzed with linear models that included the main variables of interest with others that can explain the change in the response variables. Some analyses were done by placing the participants into subgroups depending on the hypotheses tested.

### ***Study Sample and Limitations***

The study participants were all randomly assigned to one of the six conditions. Table 5.1 provides a demographic overview of the study participants.

With 38.2% of the participants being male and 61.1% of the participants being female, the study participants have a slightly higher proportion of the female population than the actual gender breakdown of the adult U.S. population. Racially, 71.9% of the participants were white, followed by 9.4% Black or African American, 6.7% Asian, 4.2% Hispanic or Latino, and 7.8% other and mixed races. Similar to other study populations of this dissertation, this participant population is largely in line with the U.S. race composition with the underrepresented Hispanic/Latino population. This study's participants were generally more educated than the average U.S. population with little less than 70% of the population having an associate's or bachelor's degree or more: 10.5% of the participants had high school degree or less; 64.4% had started or completed an associate's or bachelor's degree; 26.1% had some or completed a graduate degree.

As for political party affiliation, 37.6% of the study participants identified themselves as Democrats (14.2% strong Democrat; 23.4% Democrat), 20.6% of the population identified themselves as Republicans (6.0% strong Republican; 14.6% Republican), and the remaining 41.6% as Independents (19.1% Independent; 12.8% Independent but lean Democrat; 9.7% Independent but lean Republican). Similar to this composition, 38.1% of the participants indicated themselves to be liberal, 29.2% to be conservative, and 42.5% to be moderate. These political compositions are quite close to the actual political breakdown of the U.S. population.

As with other study samples recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk, several demographic areas of this experiment, especially race, are not fully representative of the U.S. population. However, this experiment mitigates possible biases that can exist within the study sample through random assignment of treatments.



Table 5.1: Demographic Summary of the Study 3 Experiment Participants (n=794)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	303	38.2%
Female	485	61.1%
Nonbinary/Others	6	0.8%
White	571	71.9%
Black/African American	75	9.4%
Asian	53	6.7%
Hispanic/Latino	33	4.2%
Mixed Race/Others	62	7.8%
High school degree or less	83	10.5%
Some college education with no degree	170	21.4%
Completed an associate's or bachelor's degree	356	44.8%
Some graduate education with no degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	39	4.9%
Have a graduate degree (e.g., MA, Ph.D., MD, or JD)	145	18.3%
Others	1	0.1%
Strong Democrat	113	14.2%
Democrat	186	23.4%
Independent but Lean Democrat	102	12.8%
Independent	152	19.1%
Independent but Lean Republican	77	9.7%
Republican	116	14.6%
Strong Republican	48	6.0%
Very Liberal	98	12.3%
Liberal	205	25.8%
Moderate but Lean Liberal	83	10.4%
Moderate	179	22.5%
Moderate but Lean Conservative	76	9.6%
Conservative	105	13.2%
Very Conservative	48	6.0%

### ***Confirming the Effects of Treatment***

Before analyzing the data to test the hypotheses of this study, I first checked if the two treatments had manipulation effects as intended.

First, I checked if the manipulation of OIST yielded differences in the participants' OIST in the partner before reading the treatment article. Participants who were assigned to the high OIST condition showed a significantly higher level of OIST in the partner than those assigned to the low OIST condition ( $t(547) = 9.49, p < .001$ ). The average level of OIST of the high OIST condition was 5.03 ( $SD = 1.20$ ) and that of the low OIST condition was 4.00 ( $SD = 1.35$ ). These average levels of OIST are similar to those observed in Study 2b, further corroborating the effectiveness of my OIST manipulation strategy.

Second, I tested whether the tone of the treatment articles was perceived as intended in a pre-test. One of six articles was randomly provided to pre-test participants. They were then asked to describe the article on a 7-point scale—whether the article was highly critical (1) or supportive of (7) the tasks done by the Biden administration and the Congress. As intended, those who read the article with positive assessments described the article to be quite supportive of the government regardless of the issue of the article ( $M = 6.26, SD = 1.25$ ). Those who read the negative assessment article described the article to be slightly critical of the government ( $M = 3.85, SD = 1.73$ ). The perceived negativity of the negative assessment articles was not as strong as I intended. However, I suspect that the first two paragraphs of the article, which explained the purpose and background of the bill, could have made the article's tone to be more supportive than expected. Yet, the majority of the pre-test participants perceived the negative assessment to be critical of the government's work, confirming that the effects of the second treatment are in the range of intention.

### ***Effect of OIST on Attitudinal and Behavioral Responses to the Article***

Regarding the effect of OIST on the participants' attitudinal and behavioral responses to the article, I hypothesized that the higher OIST in the partner would elicit higher interest and attention along with more agreeable attitudes (H1, H2, H3).

I used the time spent on reading as a measurement of interest. Table 5.2 provides the summary of the effect of OIST on the time spent on reading. Participants with low OIST in the partner

spent 7.010 more seconds than those with high OIST in the partner, yet the effect was not significant at  $p < 0.05$  ( $p = 0.061$ ). A significant effect was found with participants' interest in the partner—having a higher level of interest in the partner led participants to spend 3.273 more seconds on the article. Unlike H1, the positive effect on time was rather observed from the interest in the partner not from the OIST. Additionally, participants with higher trust in the general public spent more time on the article than those with a lower level of trust in the general public, while participants with a higher level of trust in the general public online spent less time than those with a lower level of trust.

Table 5.2: Effect of OIST on Time Spent on Reading the Treatment Article

	Time Spent in Reading
(Intercept)	7.550 (8.240)
Low OIST	7.010 (3.739)
Strong Partisanship	-3.677 (3.712)
Interest in the Partner (Pre-Treatment)	3.273** (1.158)
Trust in the General Public (Pre-Treatment)	6.372** (2.214)
Trust in the Public Online (Pre-Treatment)	-5.494** (1.809)
Observations	549
Log Likelihood	-2,835.129
Akaike Inf. Crit.	5,682.258

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST* and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

Regarding the attitudinal responses to the article, I measured how much participants agreed with the article and how convincing they found the article to be (see Table 5.3). For both response variables, participants found the article to be less agreeable and less convincing when they held lower OIST in their partners. However, neither effects were statistically significant. In the case of one's interest in the partner, one unit increase in the interest leads to a 0.117- and 0.115-point increase in one's assessment of the article to be agreeable and convincing, respectively. In these attitudinal

responses, none of the trusts in the public had significant effects. H2 and H3 suggested positive causal relationships between OIST and how agreeable and convincing the people found the article, but the positive significant effects were found between the interest in the partner and the attitudinal response variables.

Table 5.3: Effect of OIST on Attitudinal Behaviors

	Dependent variable:	
	(1)	(2)
	Agree with the Article	Convinced by the Article
(Intercept)	3.736*** (0.302)	3.535*** (0.304)
Low OIST	-0.210 (0.137)	-0.188 (0.138)
Strong Partisanship	0.146 (0.136)	0.224 (0.137)
Interest in the Partner (Pre-Treatment)	0.117** (0.042)	0.115** (0.043)
Trust in the General Public (Pre-Treatment)	0.083 (0.081)	0.117 (0.082)
Trust in the Public Online (Pre-Treatment)	0.019 (0.066)	0.010 (0.067)
Observations	549	549
Log Likelihood	-1,020.572	-1,024.463
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,053.143	2,060.927

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST* and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

Lastly, I measured the intention to share the article, and Table 5.4 displays the summary of the linear model. Interest in the partner again had a statistically significant effect on the participant's intention to share the article to their family, friends, and online friends: The more interest one has in the partner, the more intention one has to share the article; the intention to share increases by 0.206 with a unit increase in interest. Furthermore, whether the participant is a strong partisan or not has a significant effect as well—strong partisans intended to share the article by 0.514-point more than moderate partisans. Similar to the other behavioral and attitudinal response variables

analyzed above, intention to share the treatment article with the people they know was positively influenced by one's interest in the partner, not by trust in the partner as I hypothesized (H6).

Table 5.4: Effect of OIST on the Intention to Share the Article

	Intention to Share the Article
(Intercept)	1.146*** (0.343)
Low OIST	-0.148 (0.156)
Strong Partisanship	0.514*** (0.155)
Interest in the Partner (Pre-Treatment)	0.206*** (0.048)
Trust in the General Public (Pre-Treatment)	0.148 (0.092)
Trust in the Public Online (Pre-Treatment)	0.083 (0.075)
Observations	549
Log Likelihood	-1,090.108
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,192.216

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST* and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

Behavioral and attitudinal responses to the article were more influenced by one's interest in the partner measured right after the OIST manipulation. I originally hypothesized that OIST in the partner would be a variable significantly influencing the response variables, but it held no apparent influence (H1, H2, H3, H6). Furthermore, the partner interest and partner trust variables had a weak correlation of .26 ( $p < .001$ ), further demonstrating that the two variables can be considered distinctly. Such distinction was also found in Study 2b where the OIST manipulation strategies did not have any significant effect on the interest of the partner.

### ***Effect of OIST on Various Political Trusts***

The main research question of my dissertation was on the effect of OIST on various forms of political trust. Since I hypothesized that the direction of the effect differs by the tone of the article (H4, H5)—whether it delivers a positive or a negative assessment of the government—I analyzed the effect of OIST on political trust by subgrouping the participant by the article’s tone. As the treatment article of this experiment reported on the work of the Biden administration and the current Congress, I hypothesized that only the trust in the Presidency/President and Congress/current members would be altered after reading the article. This goes back to my refined hypothesis after Study 1, in which I posited that trust in a specific branch can be independently manipulated, irrespective of trust in other branches.

For the subgroup who read the positive assessment about the Biden administration and the current Congress, OIST had no significant influence on diffuse, specific, and issue-specific trust in the Presidency/President Biden and Congress/current Congress members. Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show that in the positive assessment article condition, political trust was influenced with statistical significance by one’s trust in the corresponding political entity measured before the treatment. Both OIST and interest in the partner did not have any influences.

Table 5.5: Effect of OIST on Diffuse and Specific Trusts in the Presidency/President and Congress/Current Congress Members When Reading Positive Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Diffuse, Specific Trust Variables			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Presidency	Congress	President Biden	Current Congress Members
(Intercept)	1.212*** (0.251)	0.508* (0.223)	0.144 (0.183)	0.029 (0.184)
Low OIST	0.235 (0.127)	0.131 (0.117)	0.011 (0.086)	0.153 (0.094)
No OIST	0.167 (0.127)	0.086 (0.117)	0.051 (0.086)	0.129 (0.094)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	-0.046 (0.039)	0.066 (0.036)	0.024 (0.026)	0.047 (0.029)
Independents	-0.513** (0.166)	-0.374* (0.153)	-0.145 (0.119)	-0.109 (0.125)
Republicans	-0.577*** (0.124)	-0.216 (0.113)	-0.126 (0.104)	-0.074 (0.094)
Strong Partisanship	0.003 (0.128)	0.016 (0.117)	0.090 (0.086)	0.061 (0.094)
Trust in Presidency (Pre-Treatment)	0.800*** (0.032)	-	-	-
Trust in Congress (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.806*** (0.030)	-	-
Trust in Biden (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	0.942*** (0.022)	-
Trust in Current Congress Members (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	-	0.885*** (0.026)
Observations	388	388	388	388
R <sup>2</sup>	0.699	0.691	0.901	0.792
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.693	0.685	0.899	0.788
Residual Std. Error (df = 380)	0.998	0.925	0.677	0.744
F Statistic (df = 7; 380)	126.011***	121.147***	494.001***	206.731***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

**Note c:** *No OIST* refers to the control condition in which participants read the treatment article directly, not through a partner.

Table 5.6: Effect of OIST on Issue-Specific Trusts in the Presidency/President and Congress/Current Congress Members When Reading Positive Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Issue-Specific Trust Variables			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Presidency	Congress	President Biden	Current Congress Members
(Intercept)	1.134*** (0.277)	0.757** (0.257)	0.445* (0.218)	0.163 (0.201)
Low OIST	0.045 (0.140)	0.070 (0.136)	0.009 (0.102)	0.123 (0.103)
No OIST	-0.046 (0.140)	-0.060 (0.136)	0.024 (0.102)	0.088 (0.103)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	-0.016 (0.043)	0.039 (0.042)	0.018 (0.031)	0.044 (0.032)
Independents	-0.228 (0.183)	-0.225 (0.177)	-0.118 (0.141)	-0.160 (0.137)
Republicans	-0.507*** (0.137)	-0.255 (0.130)	-0.303* (0.124)	-0.202 (0.103)
Strong Partisanship	0.270 (0.141)	0.022 (0.135)	-0.037 (0.102)	-0.005 (0.103)
Trust in Presidency (Pre-Treatment)	0.750*** (0.035)	-	-	-
Trust in Congress (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.767*** (0.035)	-	-
Trust in Biden (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	0.918*** (0.026)	-
Trust in Current Congress Members (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	-	0.892*** (0.028)
Observations	388	388	388	388
R <sup>2</sup>	0.631	0.597	0.863	0.767
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.624	0.590	0.860	0.763
Residual Std. Error (df = 380)	1.101	1.068	0.805	0.814
F Statistic (df = 7; 380)	92.683***	80.454***	341.342***	178.507***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

**Note c:** *No OIST* refers to the control condition in which participants read the treatment article directly, not through a partner.



Contrastingly, the subgroup who read the article with the negative assessment of the government was significantly influenced by OIST in forming his/her post-treatment political trust (see Table 5.7). As hypothesized, the participants who received a negative assessment news article from a trusted member ended up exhibiting the lowest level of political trust in the entities when compared with participants who had low OIST in their partners or those from the control condition. And this effect of OIST is independent of one's party identification and partisanship strength.

When all other variables were controlled, the participants with low levels of OIST in the partner elicited higher levels of political trust in the Presidency/President Biden and Congress than those with a high level of OIST—having a high level of OIST in the partner created a 0.210-, 0.205-, 0.172-, and 0.161-point lower level of trust in the Presidency, Congress, President Biden, and the current Congress members, respectively, compared to when having a low level of OIST in the partner (see Table 5.7). The effect of a low level of OIST on trust in the current members the Congress appeared not to be statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ . However, both the effect size and its  $p$ -value ( $p = .084$ ) suggest that it may be possible to conclude that OIST creates significant changes in both diffuse and specific trust in the subjects of the article, as hypothesized in H5.

The control group, composed of participants who read the article directly, not through a partner, displayed relatively higher levels of diffuse trust in the Presidency and Congress than those who had high OIST in their partners as well. In terms of comparing effect sizes for diffuse trust, participants in the low OIST condition exhibited a lower level of political trust than those in the control condition without any OIST. For both low and no OIST levels, larger effect sizes were observed when influencing the diffuse trust than the specific trust.

One significant pattern, however, was that issue-specific trusts were rarely influenced by levels of OIST, except when the participants were asked about their trust in the Presidency handling the issue after reading the negative assessment article (see Table 5.8). Similar to its effect on other types of political trust, high OIST partners induced a lower level of issue-specific trust, in general, than low OIST partners when reading the negative assessment article. But these effects were not statistically significant except the one on the issue-specific diffuse trust in the Presidency. However, this study did not measure the participant's issue-specific trust in political entities handling the issue presented in the article. If the study had measured said issue-specific trust and therefore included it as an independent variable, there may have been changes to OIST's effect on issue-specific trusts.

Table 5.7: Effect of OIST on Diffuse and Specific Trusts in the Presidency/President and Congress/Current Congress Members When Reading Negative Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Diffuse, Specific Trust Variables			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Presidency	Congress	President Biden	Current Congress Members
(Intercept)	0.694** (0.210)	0.326 (0.180)	0.309 (0.166)	0.127 (0.179)
Low OIST	0.210* (0.106)	0.205* (0.095)	0.172* (0.078)	0.161 (0.093)
No OIST	0.323** (0.109)	0.261** (0.097)	0.119 (0.080)	-0.002 (0.096)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	0.035 (0.032)	0.030 (0.029)	0.006 (0.023)	-0.0001 (0.028)
Independents	-0.346* (0.143)	-0.157 (0.128)	-0.220* (0.110)	0.015 (0.127)
Republicans	-0.515*** (0.101)	-0.146 (0.089)	-0.203* (0.093)	0.086 (0.090)
Strong Partisanship	0.005 (0.108)	0.069 (0.096)	0.004 (0.079)	0.060 (0.095)
Trust in Presidency (Pre-Treatment)	0.819*** (0.027)	-	-	-
Trust in Congress (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.859*** (0.025)	-	-
Trust in Biden (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	0.918*** (0.020)	-
Trust in Current Congress Members (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	-	0.918*** (0.026)
Observations	406	406	406	406
R <sup>2</sup>	0.744	0.766	0.908	0.781
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.740	0.761	0.906	0.777
Residual Std. Error (df = 398)	0.863	0.772	0.634	0.759
F Statistic (df = 7; 398)	165.407***	185.709***	558.478***	203.119***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

**Note c:** *No OIST* refers to the control condition in which participants read the treatment article directly, not through a partner.

Table 5.8: Effect of OIST on Issue-Specific Trusts in the Presidency/President and Congress/Current Congress Members When Reading Negative Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Issue-Specific Trust Variables			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Presidency	Congress	President Biden	Current Congress Members
(Intercept)	0.141 (0.234)	0.095 (0.200)	0.270 (0.183)	0.158 (0.171)
Low OIST	0.360** (0.118)	0.142 (0.105)	0.093 (0.085)	-0.017 (0.089)
No OIST	0.222 (0.120)	0.078 (0.108)	0.001 (0.088)	-0.087 (0.092)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	0.060 (0.035)	0.028 (0.032)	0.004 (0.026)	-0.005 (0.027)
Independents	-0.096 (0.159)	0.124 (0.142)	-0.028 (0.121)	0.115 (0.121)
Republicans	-0.422*** (0.112)	-0.032 (0.098)	-0.121 (0.103)	0.119 (0.087)
Strong Partisanship	0.172 (0.120)	0.232* (0.107)	-0.065 (0.087)	-0.072 (0.091)
Trust in Presidency (Pre-Treatment)	0.861*** (0.030)	-	-	-
Trust in Congress (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.882*** (0.027)	-	-
Trust in Biden (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	0.929*** (0.022)	-
Trust in Current Congress Members (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	-	0.949*** (0.025)
Observations	406	406	406	406
R <sup>2</sup>	0.718	0.735	0.889	0.802
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.713	0.730	0.887	0.798
Residual Std. Error (df = 398)	0.958	0.857	0.698	0.728
F Statistic (df = 7; 398)	144.426***	157.610***	455.974***	229.744***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

**Note c:** *No OIST* refers to the control condition in which participants read the treatment article directly, not through a partner.

Lastly, there was no change in trust observed in the Supreme Court/its current members, the overall national election process/2020 elections, and the overall democratic system after reading an article delivered by a partner, no matter the tone of the article (positive/negative) or the level of OIST in the partner. (see Tables I1, I2, I3, I4 in Appendix I for detail). In other words, the effect was only limited to the Biden administration and the Congress that were in charge of the bill introduced in the article. This result reconfirms the finding from Study 1 that people organize their trust by institution, and each trust can be affected independently depending on the information received.

### ***Effect of Partisanship on OIST***

Unlike I hypothesized in H7 and H8, the level of OIST did not change for strong partisans, nor moderate partisans, depending on the consistency of the news article's description with their prior view on the issue. This insignificant result indicates that it is more difficult to alter the constructed OIST than to alter the level of political trust in certain political entities.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study examined how OIST in a partner influences one's level of political trust when the partner shares a political article. Furthermore, how OIST in the partner influences one's attitudinal and behavioral responses to the article has been investigated. Results of Study 3 demonstrated that the relationship between OIST in the partner and political trust is not as simple as expected—in general, the tone of the article moderates this relationship, and effects are mostly limited to diffuse and specific political trust in the entities from the article.

First, there was a clear distinction between what OIST and what interest in the partner each influences. All attitudinal and behavioral responses were significantly influenced by how much interest one had in the partner just after the OIST manipulation. When a participant held a higher level of interest in the partner, one spent more time reading the article; the participant also perceived the article to be more agreeable and convincing, and held a greater intention to share the article.

On the other hand, political trust was influenced by trust in the partner, not by an interest in him or her. However, the effect of OIST was moderated by the tone of the article: participants were only influenced by OIST when reading an article with negative assessments of the government. As hypothesized in Chapter 2, a news article, shared by a trusted partner, that framed the government action in a negative light decreased political trust, mostly diffuse and specific trust, more than the

article shared by a less trusted or untrusted member. But such an effect of OIST was not found when the article framed the government action in a positive light.

By using the 36 NPTMS trust items, I was able to find that the treatment article only influenced the trust in the Presidency/President and Congress/current members. Trust in political entities, especially those in the Supreme Court and its current members, unrelated to the content of the article were not influenced by either the OIST or interest in the partner. Again, this echoes the findings from Study 1 that people formulate different political trust around intuitions and the people in those institutions. With separate trusts in institutions/people in position, different political trust can be formulated and changed independently.

Such statistically significant effects were found after only a limited time to build OIST in the partner and after reading one article. The effects found in this study answered some questions about the relationship between OIST and political trust, but even more extensive findings can be investigated with repeated exposures to the treatments and measures of the effect.

Study 3 attempted to simulate what happens in the real world of online interactions as much as possible. OIST manipulation simulated the online environment where trust is built with limited information about the trustee without face-to-face interactions. In providing the treatment article, a short endorsement message attempted to simulate how people share news articles online. However, there are several limitations in replicating real online interactions. First, this experiment provided only one article, making it a one-time exposure experiment. Exposures to more articles or to a more diverse set of articles may create enhancements or differences in the results. Also, this experiment's endorsement message was limited to a positive endorsement, but in real interactions, people share articles for various reasons, such as when they disagree with the viewpoint or the content. The diversification of the sender's reaction to the article can further broaden our understanding of the relationship between OIST and political trust. Lastly, this experiment could not fully simulate the possible exchange of reactions to the article. In the online environment, it is not difficult to observe conversations sparked by a share of an article. As such post-article conversation is one of the representative features of the online environment today, it will be an important future study to work on.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Methods of obtaining information about our government in the digital media era have become more diverse than ever. In the modern democratic society, news articles are one of the most crucial ways of getting to know about politicians and how larger political systems function. Many previous studies demonstrated that media influence the formation of and change in political trust.

We still read news directly from news publishers with print newspapers, television broadcasts, and publishers' digital platforms. But an increasing number of people are now consuming news shared by people around them more frequently. This pattern can also be seen in my study, as a majority of people answered that their family members and/or friends share news articles quite frequently with them, and that they themselves share news articles with their family members and/or friends as well. These news consumption habits of sharing news with people around oneself are observed irrespective of one's gender, race, education level, party identification, and political ideology. With this mix of ways in which we consume news articles, understanding how the *person sharing the information* affects the receiver of information is crucial to investigate the effect of news articles on readers.

This dissertation, therefore, attempted to extend the literature by examining how the manipulation of online interpersonal social trust (OIST) influences not only attitudinal and behavioral responses to the article but also political trust, a more deep-seated attitude. In order to investigate this question, this dissertation revisited the concept of political trust by investigating the following questions: how it has been measured, how the public constructs the concept, and what a reliable and valid measurement reflecting the public's conceptualization of political trust is (Study 1). Then, I introduced OIST, which functions as a main explanatory variable, and explored the way to manipulate such interpersonal social trust in an experimental setting (Study 2).

## 6.1 Central Findings

Study 1 examined how the public formulates the structure of political trust in their mind and attempted to develop a valid and reliable measurement of political trust. Study 1 suggested several important patterns in how the public formulates political trust. First, people seem to generally organize their political trust by institutions and the people holding positions in the institutions, instead by the traditional distinction between diffuse and specific support. In addition, whether one shares the same party with the President has an effect on whether or not they distinguish their diffuse trust in the Presidency from their specific trust in the President. Furthermore, the finding that the public distinguishes political trust in the three branches was corroborated by Study 3 as the dimensions of political trust were changed independently.

Study 2 attempted to understand the factors that lead to OIST and find ways to experimentally manipulate OIST, which is a crucial explanatory variable of this dissertation. As explained earlier in Chapter 2, OIST is a distinct concept I introduced in this dissertation—a trust in a particular person one interacts with in an online sphere. I explained differences with concepts such as *source credibility*, *source similarity*, *generalized social trust*, and *trust in online friends*. By using two different manipulation strategies, partner profile and flashcard exercise, simultaneously, Study 2 demonstrated that it is possible to manipulate only OIST without influencing other types of social trust: this was done by providing both information on similarity/dissimilarity to the partner and shared experiences. The manipulation strategies used were simple and powerful when used together.

Based on these two studies, Study 3 tackled the central research question of this dissertation: *how do news articles shared by a trusted member of one's online social network influence one's level of political trust?* As I hypothesized in H5, Study 3 found that receiving a piece of political article from a person one trusts influences one's level of trust when the article delivers negative assessments of the government: higher trust in the information sender resulted in a lower level of trust in the subjects of the article. However, the level of OIST had no significant influence on one's political trust when reading an article with positive assessments of the government (H4). These results indicate that the influence of OIST is moderated by the tone of the article, which portrays a more complicated relationship than I hypothesized.

Along with trust in government, Study 3 also examined how OIST in a partner influences one's attitudinal and behavioral responses to the shared article. Unlike the hypotheses, attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the article—time spent on reading (H1), finding the article agreeable (H2) and convincing (H3), and intention to share the article (H6)—were not influenced by the level of OIST in the partner but by the interest in him/her. This study demonstrated that interest and trust in someone function distinctively and that being attentive to and getting convinced by the information do not directly cause a change in one's political trust. This result seems to broaden the finding from Study 2b that the manipulation strategy I created does not influence one's interest in the partner, while significantly changing the level of OIST.

Lastly, Study 3 tested if one's strength of prior political views would influence the relationship between social and political trust by making strong partisans update their OIST in the partners based on the agreeableness of the shared content. However, the study did not find any of the hypothesized relationships (H7, H8).

## **6.2 Contributions of My Research**

This dissertation comprises three main contributions to the existing literature on political trust and social trust.

First, I attempted to revisit and expand our understanding on how to measure political trust. The results of Study 1 suggest that theoretical distinctions made by scholars and how the public creates the meaning of political trust may differ. This throws a question of what a “good” way of measuring—both being valid and reliable—political trust in public surveys is. Many public surveys and studies demonstrated and expressed concerns about the constant decline in political trust and how we should restore it. By better understanding how the public factorizes public trust, this study contributes a ground to better understand the changes in political trust, such as which branch of government is losing trust from the public and how trusts in different branches of the government are interrelated.

Additionally, social trust, especially interpersonal social trust, was revisited for both conceptualization and experimental manipulation. Study 2a expanded the existing literature on similarity's influence on interpersonal trust by investigating how individuals treat information pieces in determining whether to trust someone when multiple information pieces are provided simultane-



ously. Many previous studies are limited to one or two information pieces being compared, and the types of information often tend to be limited to racial or political information. However, Study 2a attempted to better reflect our day-to-day interactions where we interact and judge someone more holistically. Study 2b developed a method to experimentally manipulate interpersonal social trust. Literature posits that shared experiences are crucial in both forming and updating interpersonal trust. Because it is difficult to instantly create shared experiences in a short experimental setting, social trust is perceived as difficult to manipulate. However, this study successfully manipulated interpersonal trust without changing other forms of social trust.

This study introduced the concept of OIST, a specific concept that is different from concepts like source credibility and source similarity, by focusing particularly on the trustworthiness of a partner built from a broad range of similarity/dissimilarity factors found in Study 2a along with shared experience. In Study 3, this dissertation connected OIST with political trust and experimentally demonstrated that they are causally related. However, it also found that the effect was moderated by the valence of the message being shared. This dissertation extended the positive effects of receiving information from a trusting person to influence deep-seated attitudes like political trust. The results demonstrate that OIST has a strong effect that can alter one's political trust with a single article, magnifying the media effect.

The relationship observed in Study 3 reflects the more complex information environment in two ways: First, information exchange in an online setting was simulated with the use of OIST as the main explanatory variable, reflecting the recent changes in how the public consumes news. Second, this experiment simulated cases in which we get news shared by someone like us, who are not necessarily experts or opinion leaders in a particular subject. And such a "regular person" can make us significantly readjust our levels of political trust. This, once more, distinguished OIST from source credibility by focusing more on the trustworthiness of a trustee, instead of his/her expertness. Furthermore, the finding from this part of the dissertation demonstrates that attitudinal and behavioral reactions to the article tend to be affected by *interest* in the partner, not by *trust* in them—clearly distinguishing the two concepts from each other.

While this study did not specifically focus on *why* we are experiencing a declining trend in political trust, Study 3 found a way in which individuals negatively adjust their trust in government. As an increasing number of people consume news through their online social network, we should

be aware of the possibilities that each individual can influence someone else's trust in government that may accumulate with continued interactions.

### **6.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Three main studies of this dissertation found some important and interesting findings of political trust, interpersonal social trust, and their relationships. However, each study had its limitations. Study 1 was not a true random survey despite the variance across key characteristics of the study sample, limiting the generalizability of the results to the entire U.S. population. Furthermore, even though the same questionnaire has been measured two times to reflect the change in power in this experiment, the reliability and validity of the NPTMS can be more accurately measured through additional rounds in the future. As some scholars pointed out, having the same set of questions on political trust being measured over time can be helpful to investigate questions such as the change in political trust and the relationship between political trust and other political/social factors.

Study 2a computed how individuals put different weights on various information about the partner, yet the computation of each weight was done with the independence of treatment. As mentioned previously in Chapter 4, conjoint analysis could not calculate the interaction effects between information pieces, even though it is rare for us to evaluate different information pieces with perfect independence in reality. Furthermore, all of the information pieces used in the experiment were in a binary form—similar or dissimilar. However, realistically, there is a range of similarities/dissimilarities when comparing two people. Usage of a more detailed scale covering the range of similarity/dissimilarity will be able to provide a more extensive understanding of how individuals process information to construct a foundation of interpersonal social trust. Study 2b applied the findings from Study 2a to manipulate OIST. The majority of people answered that they believed they were partnered up with a real experiment participant, but future studies can find ways to increase the believability of the partner even further.

The relationship between OIST and political trust investigated in Study 3 can be more complicated yet more realistic if trust in the news media source gets involved in the equation. This dissertation limited the scope to OIST and political trust, but the trust in media is another crucial factor in understanding how political trust changes via mediated information. Furthermore, as with many media effect studies, this experiment was a one-time exposure experiment. With a

longitudinal study format, it will be possible to investigate the effects of providing multiple exposures, conflicting articles, and even allowing more interactions with the partner on political trust. Lastly, this experiment controlled the endorsement message sent with the article, but it will also be interesting to investigate how the effect changes when the content or tone of the message changes. Also, it will be interesting for future studies to examine how diverse ways of expressing agreement or disagreement with the message (e.g., Facebook's seven reactions—like, love, care, haha, wow, sad, angry; Twitter's like, retweet, quote retweet) can create different effects.

This study attempted to examine how the two forms of trust influence each other in the new media environment where our ways of consuming news have changed. However, most of the studies that I visited to construct the foundations for political trust, social trust, and the media usage pattern in the new media environment were done in the context of OECD countries. Furthermore, experiments of this dissertation were all implemented in the U.S. context. It is difficult to extrapolate how the relationships I found and the concepts I defined would change in different contexts, such as countries with non-developed democracies. Future studies should attempt to test with more various contexts and even further discuss what the appropriate level of trust in a system is and how it varies by system.

## Appendix A. NPTMS Questionnaire (Study 1)

### Section 1: Diffuse trust

The following questions ask about the level of **trust you have in the political institutions of the United States**. When answering these questions, we want you to think of the **systems and institutions in general** instead of the specific persons currently holding positions. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- Q. How much trust do you have in the **Presidency** of the United States?
- Q. How much trust do you have in the **Congress** of the United States?
- Q. How much trust do you have in the **Supreme Court** of the United States?
- Q. How much trust do you have in the **overall democratic system** of the United States?
- Q. How much trust do you have in the **national election process** in the United States?

### Section 2: Specific trust

The following questions ask the level of **trust you have in the specific person(s) serving political roles in the United States**. When answering these questions, we want you to think of **specific persons currently holding the positions** instead of the general systems and institutions. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- Q. How much trust do you have in **President Donald Trump/President Joe Biden**?
- Q. How much trust do you have in the **current congressmen/congresswomen** of the United States?
- Q. How much trust do you have in the **current members of the Supreme Court** of the United States?
- Q. How much trust do you have in the **outcomes of the 2018 national elections/outcomes of the 2020 national elections** of the United States?

### Section 3: Issues of interest

Now, you will be asked to name some of the problems that you think the United States is facing today. In the following boxes, please name the **three most important problems** the United States is facing today.

- Problem 1:
- Problem 2:
- Problem 3:

#### **Section 4: Issue-specific diffuse trust**

The following questions ask about the level of **trust you have in the political institutions of the United States**. When answering these questions, we want you to think of the **systems and institutions in general** instead of the specific persons currently holding positions. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered [problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time]. How much trust do you have in the **Presidency** of the United States **to handle this issue?**
- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered [*problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time*]. How much trust do you have in the **Congress** of the United States **to handle this issue?**
- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered [*problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time*]. How much trust do you have in the **Supreme Court** of the United States **to handle this issue?**
- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered [*problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time*]. How much trust do you have in the **overall democratic system** of the United States **to handle this issue?**
- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered [*problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time*]. How much trust do you have in the **national election process** in the United States **to handle this issue?**

#### **Section 5: Issue-specific specific trust**

The following questions ask the level of trust you have in the specific person(s) serving political roles in the United States. When answering these questions, we want you to think of specific persons currently holding the positions instead of the general systems and institutions. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered *[problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time]*. How much trust do you have in **President Donald Trump/President Joe Biden to handle this issue?**
- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered *[problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time]*. How much trust do you have in the **current congressmen/congresswomen** of the United States **to handle this issue?**
- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered *[problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time]*. How much trust do you have in the **current members of the Supreme Court** of the United States **to handle this issue?**
- Q. In the previous question asking for the most important problems the United States is facing today, you answered *[problem 1/2/3 appearing one at a time]*. How much trust do you have in the **outcomes of the 2018 national elections/outcomes of the 2020 elections** of the United States **to handle this issue?**

**Section 6: Demographics and other questions (media usage pattern, social trust)**

- Q. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others are not as interested. Which best describes how often you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?
- Most of the time
  - Some of the time
  - Only now and then
  - Hardly at all
- Q. In the past 24 hours, have you ... (Answer choices: Yes (1) No (2))
- Watched TV News
  - Read a newspaper in print or online
  - Listened to a radio news or talk show
  - Read a news blog
- Q. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))
- People like me do not have any say about what the government does.
  - Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot

really understand what is going on.

- Voting is the only way that a person like me can have any say about how the government runs things.

Q. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? (Answer choice in a 7-point scale: You can't be too careful in dealing with people (1) to Most people can be trusted (7))

Q. Please rate how much you agree with the following statement: Most people in this society are trustworthy. (Answer choice in a 7-point scale: Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (7))

Q. Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?

- They would try to take advantage of me
- They would try to be fair
- Don't know

Q. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?

- People try to be helpful
- People mostly look out for themselves
- Don't know

Q. Which of the following best describes your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Nonbinary
- Other

Q. Which of the following best describes your own background in racial and ethnic terms? Please select all that apply.

- Black or African American
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Native American or American Indian
- Middle Eastern

- Other

Q. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have completed?

- Some high school, but no degree
- High school degree
- Some college, but no degree
- Associate's or Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate school, but no degree
- Graduate degree (e.g., MA, PhD, MD, or JD)
- Other

Q. Which of the following best describes your party affiliation?

- Strong Democrat
- Democrat
- Independent, but I lean Democrat
- Independent
- Independent, but I lean Republican
- Republican
- Strong Republican

Q. Which of the following best describes your ideology?

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Moderate, but lean liberal
- Moderate
- Moderate, but lean conservative
- Conservative
- Very conservative

Q. Please select all of the activities that you have done over the last 12 months.

- Voted in an election
- Contacted a politician or government official
- Worked for a political party or action group
- Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker
- Signed a petition



- Taken part in a lawful public demonstration
- Boycotted certain products
- Posted or shared anything about politics online
- Other
- None of these

## Appendix B. Factor Loadings on Political Trust

Table B1: Second Round Factor Loadings on Political Trust (Whole Population)

	Factors		
	I	II	III
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )	0.55		
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	0.77		
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.66		
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.63		
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )	<b>0.97</b>		
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )	0.91		
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )	0.77		
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )	0.77		
Election ( <b>G</b> )	0.82		
Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.49		
Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.38		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>S</b> )	0.95		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I1</b> )	0.70		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I2</b> )	0.61		
Outcome of the 2020 Election ( <b>I3</b> )	0.55		
Demsys ( <b>G</b> )	0.42		
Demsys ( <b>I1</b> )	0.43		
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )		0.63	
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.88</b>	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )		0.82	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )		0.85	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )		0.70	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.86	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )		0.81	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )		0.85	
Election ( <b>I3</b> )		0.35	
Congress ( <b>G</b> )			0.78
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )			0.65
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )			0.83
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )			<b>0.88</b>
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )			0.81
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.63
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.75
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )			0.78
Demsys ( <b>I2</b> )			0.40
Demsys ( <b>I3</b> )			0.44
<b>Correlations between factors</b>			
I	-	0.48	0.75
II	-	-	0.64

Table B2: Second Round Abridged Factor Loadings on Political Trust (Whole Population)

	<b>Factors</b>		
	I	II	III
Presidency ( <b>G</b> )	0.65		
Presidency ( <b>I1</b> )	0.82		
Presidency ( <b>I2</b> )	0.70		
Presidency ( <b>I3</b> )	0.69		
Joe Biden ( <b>S</b> )	<b>1.00</b>		
Joe Biden ( <b>I1</b> )	0.92		
Joe Biden ( <b>I2</b> )	0.81		
Joe Biden ( <b>I3</b> )	0.81		
Supreme Court ( <b>G</b> )		0.80	
Supreme Court ( <b>I1</b> )		<b>0.86</b>	
Supreme Court ( <b>I2</b> )		0.76	
Supreme Court ( <b>I3</b> )		0.79	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>S</b> )		0.85	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I1</b> )		0.84	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I2</b> )		0.77	
Current Supreme Court Members ( <b>I3</b> )		0.80	
Congress ( <b>G</b> )			0.43
Congress ( <b>I1</b> )			0.62
Congress ( <b>I2</b> )			<b>0.85</b>
Congress ( <b>I3</b> )			0.83
Current Congress Members ( <b>S</b> )			0.53
Current Congress Members ( <b>I1</b> )			0.65
Current Congress Members ( <b>I2</b> )			0.80
Current Congress Members ( <b>I3</b> )			0.82
<b>Correlations between factors</b>			
I	-	0.47	0.75
II	-	-	0.61

## Appendix C. Study 2a Questionnaire

### Section 1: Demographics

We would like to learn about you. Please answer the questions following.

Q. Which of the following best describes your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Nonbinary
- Other

Q. What is your age?

- 18-24 years old
- 25-29 years old
- 30-34 years old
- 35-39 years old
- 40-44 years old
- 45-49 years old
- 50-54 years old
- 55-59 years old
- 60-64 years old
- 65 years or older

Q. Which of the following best describes your own background in racial and ethnic terms? Please select all that apply.

- Black or African American
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Native American or American Indian
- Middle Eastern
- Other

Q. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have completed?

- Some high school, but no degree
- High school degree
- Some college, but no degree
- Associate's or Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate school, but no degree
- Graduate degree (e.g., MA, PhD, MD, or JD)
- Other

Q. Which of the following best describes your party affiliation?

- Strong Democrat
- Democrat
- Independent, but I lean Democrat
- Independent
- Independent, but I lean Republican
- Republican
- Strong Republican

Q. Which of the following best describes your religious preference?

- Catholic
- Other Christian (e.g. Protestant, Greek Orthodox, or Mormon)
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Other
- Agnostic
- Atheist
- Nothing in particular

Q. Which of the following best describes your ideology?

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Moderate, but lean liberal
- Moderate

- Moderate, but lean conservative
- Conservative
- Very conservative

## **Section 2: Profile construction questions**

We are now going to move on to the questionnaire designed to measure other dimensions of your personality. This questionnaire has been designed to solicit your opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about various topics. Our algorithms will then use your responses to partner you with other players. As part of this questionnaire, you will see questions about your entertainment preferences, political ideology, religious practices, policy preferences, and social attitudes. Some of your responses will be used to generate an information profile about you that is anonymously shared with other players after this section.

Q. Please select all of the activities that you have done over the last 12 months.

- Voted in an election
- Contacted a politician or government official
- Worked for a political party or action group
- Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker
- Signed a petition
- Taken part in a lawful public demonstration
- Boycotted certain products
- Posted or shared anything about politics online
- Other
- None of these

Q. Which of the following do you think are the three most important problems the United States is facing today?

- Dissatisfaction with government / poor leadership
- Immigration / illegal aliens
- Race relations / racism
- Unifying the country / divisions in country
- Healthcare
- Environmental concerns / pollution / global warming

- The media
- Guns / gun control
- Education
- Crime / Violence / Justice System
- Welfare
- Religious / Family Decline
- Lack of respect for each other
- The economy, in general
- Unemployment
- Distribution of wealth / inequality / poverty
- Federal budget deficit / federal debt / government spending
- Taxes
- Corporate corruption
- Foreign policy, in general
- National security / defense
- Foreign trade, in general
- International issues
- Terrorism / war
- Others
- Ethics / Moral Decline
- Public health

Q. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others are not as interested. Which best describes how often you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Only now and then
- Hardly at all
- Don't know

Q. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- People like me do not have any say about what the government does.
- Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.
- Voting is the only way that a person like me can have any say about how the government runs things.

Q. How much trust do you have in the following institutions of the United States? When answering these questions, we want you to think of the systems and institutions in general instead of the specific persons currently holding positions. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- Presidency
- Congress
- Supreme Court
- Overall democratic system
- National election process

Q. How much trust do you have in following specific officeholders or events? When answering these questions, we want you to think of specific person(s) serving political roles in the United States. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- President Donald Trump
- Current members of Congress
- Current members of the Supreme Court
- Most recent election results in 2018

Q. Which are your three favorite types of music?

- EDM (Electronic Dance Music)
- Rock/Indie rock music
- Jazz
- Dubstep
- R&B and soul
- Techno
- Country music
- Electro
- Pop music



- Blues music
- Hip hop
- Latin
- Classical music
- World music (e.g., K-pop, J-pop)
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite genres of fiction books?

- Adventure
- Classics
- Comic/Graphic novels
- Crime/Detective
- Fantasy
- Historical fiction
- Horror
- Humor
- Mystery
- Poetry
- Romance
- Satire
- Science fiction
- Short story
- Spy fiction
- Superhero fiction
- Suspense/Thriller
- Travel
- Western
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite genres of non-fiction books?

- Art
- Biography/Autobiography
- Business

- Cooking
- Health
- History
- Philosophy
- Politics
- Religion
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Travel
- True Crime
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite types of films?

- Action
- Adventure
- Cartoon/Animation
- Children/Family
- Classics
- Comedy
- Crime
- Documentary
- Drama
- History
- Horror
- Independent
- International
- Military/War
- Music/Musicals
- Romance
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Science/Nature
- Sports

- Superhero
- Thriller/Mystery
- Western
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite types of television shows?

- Action
- Adventure
- Cartoon/Animation
- Children/Family
- Comedy
- Crime
- Documentary
- Drama
- Game shows
- History
- Horror
- International
- Military/War
- Music/Musicals
- Reality TV
- Romance
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Talk shows
- Teen
- Thriller/Mystery
- Western
- Sitcom
- Soap operas
- None of the above

Q. Which style of clothes do you prefer the most?

- Classically cut and good value for your money
- Modest and appropriate
- Daring and out of the ordinary
- Comfortable
- Chic and stylish
- Other

Q. How important is religion in your life?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not too important
- Not at all important

Q. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- A few times a year
- Seldom
- Never

### **Section 3: Partner explanation**

Later in this study, you will be playing a series of games with another participant (“Partner”). In order to assign you a Partner, you will now be connected to other players. You and the other players (“Partner”) will work on a series of simple exercises together. Your Partners have been assigned randomly. In other words, he/she may be a lot like you or may not. To learn about your Partners, we will provide some information about your Partners to tell you whether you two are the same or different on political party identification, race, gender, and religion. In addition, we used you and your Partner’s answers to create two additional measures comparing you to your Partner:

**Political Preferences:** How well your positions on the various political issues and policies we asked about match with those of your Partner. **Cultural Preferences:** How well your preferences for books, clothes, music, films, and television programs match with those of your Partner. **Reli-**

**giosity:** How well the intensity of your religious practices matches with that of your Partner.

#### **Section 4: Practice Rounds**

We are now going to move onto our games. Before we connect you to other players, we would like you to participate in a few practice rounds with computer-simulated players.

**In the following section, you will be asked to choose which of two other players you think would be a better partner for different reasons (the particular reason you should consider each time will be noted at the top of the page).**

You will have 25 seconds to make a choice. You can move on to the next question after 16 seconds if you made a choice. Now, you will work on **two training rounds**.

*[if assigned to the Information Recipient Condition]*

- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **act in your best interest** more when **buying something from him/her online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other **players you think would be more sincere and genuine** when **buying something from him/her online**.

*[if assigned to the Product Purchaser Condition]*

- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **act in your best interest** more when **sharing any information with you online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more sincere and genuine** when **sharing information with you online**.

#### **Section 5: Profile selection game**

*[if assigned to the Information Recipient Condition]*

You are now ready to be connected to other players!

There will be 13 different rounds to make your choice between two randomly assigned players. In every round, you will be connected to two new players, so we encourage you to **make your choice based on the profiles of each Partner in every round**. In other words, there is no need for

you to make choices based on any previous rounds.

Imagine a situation in which **you are receiving information from your Partner in an online setting**, such as Facebook Messenger, Instagram direct message, Twitter mention, and/or email. **Information can be about anything**—from finding a restaurant for dinner to finding a stock to invest.

In the following section, you will be asked to choose which of two other players you think would be a better partner for different reasons (the particular reason you should consider each time will be noted at the top of the page).

You will have **25 seconds** to make a choice. You can move on to the next question after **16 seconds if you made a choice**.

- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **act in your best interest more** when **sharing any information with you online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **do his/her best to help you more** when **sharing information with you online**, if you required help.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more interested in your well-being** when **sharing information with you online**, not just his/her own.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more truthful in his/her dealings with you** when **sharing information with you online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you would characterize as **more honest** when **sharing information with you online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **keep his/her commitments more** when **sharing information with you online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more sincere and genuine** when **sharing information with you online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more competent and effective** when **sharing information online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **better perform his/her role of sharing information online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be a **more capable and proficient**

**information sharer in the online sphere.**

- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more knowledgeable as an information-sharer in the online sphere, in general.**
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think is **more trustworthy.**
- Q. Choose which of the two other players **whom you would trust more.**

*[if assigned to the Product Purchaser Condition]*

You are now ready to be connected to other players!

There will be 13 different rounds to make your choice between two randomly assigned players. In every round, you will be connected to two new players, so we encourage you to **make your choice based on the profiles of each Partner in every round.** In other words, there is no need for you to make choices based on any previous rounds.

Imagine a situation in which **you are purchasing something from your Partner in an online setting,** such as Facebook Messenger, Instagram direct message, Twitter mention, and/or email. **Item can be anything**—from a pen to a laptop.

**In the following section, you will be asked to choose which of two other players you think would be a better partner for different reasons (the particular reason you should consider each time will be noted at the top of the page).**

You will have **25 seconds** to make a choice. You can move on to the next question after **16 seconds if you made a choice.**

- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **act in your best interest more** when **buying something from him/her online.**
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **do his/her best to help you more** when **buying something from him/her online,** if you required help.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more interested in your well-being** when **buying something from him/her online,** not just his/her own.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more truthful in his/her dealings with you** when **buying something from him/her online.**

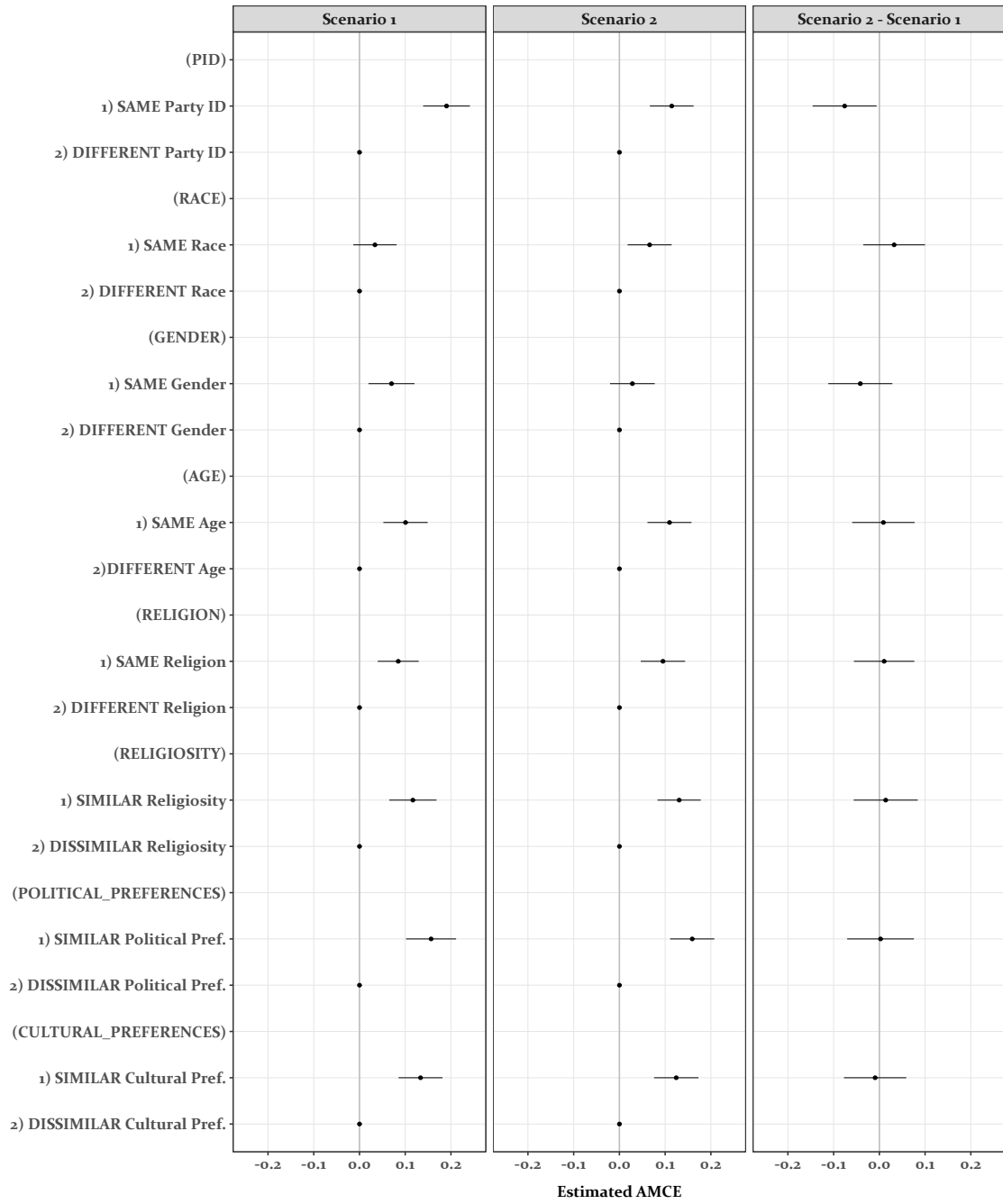
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you would characterize as **more honest** when **buying something from him/her online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **keep his/her commitments more** when **buying something from him/her online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more sincere and genuine** when **buying something from him/her online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more competent and effective** when **selling something online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would **better perform his/her role of selling something online**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be a **more capable and proficient seller in the online market**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think would be **more knowledgeable as an online seller in general**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players you think is **more trustworthy**.
- Q. Choose which of the two other players **whom you would trust more**.

### **Section 6: Believability**

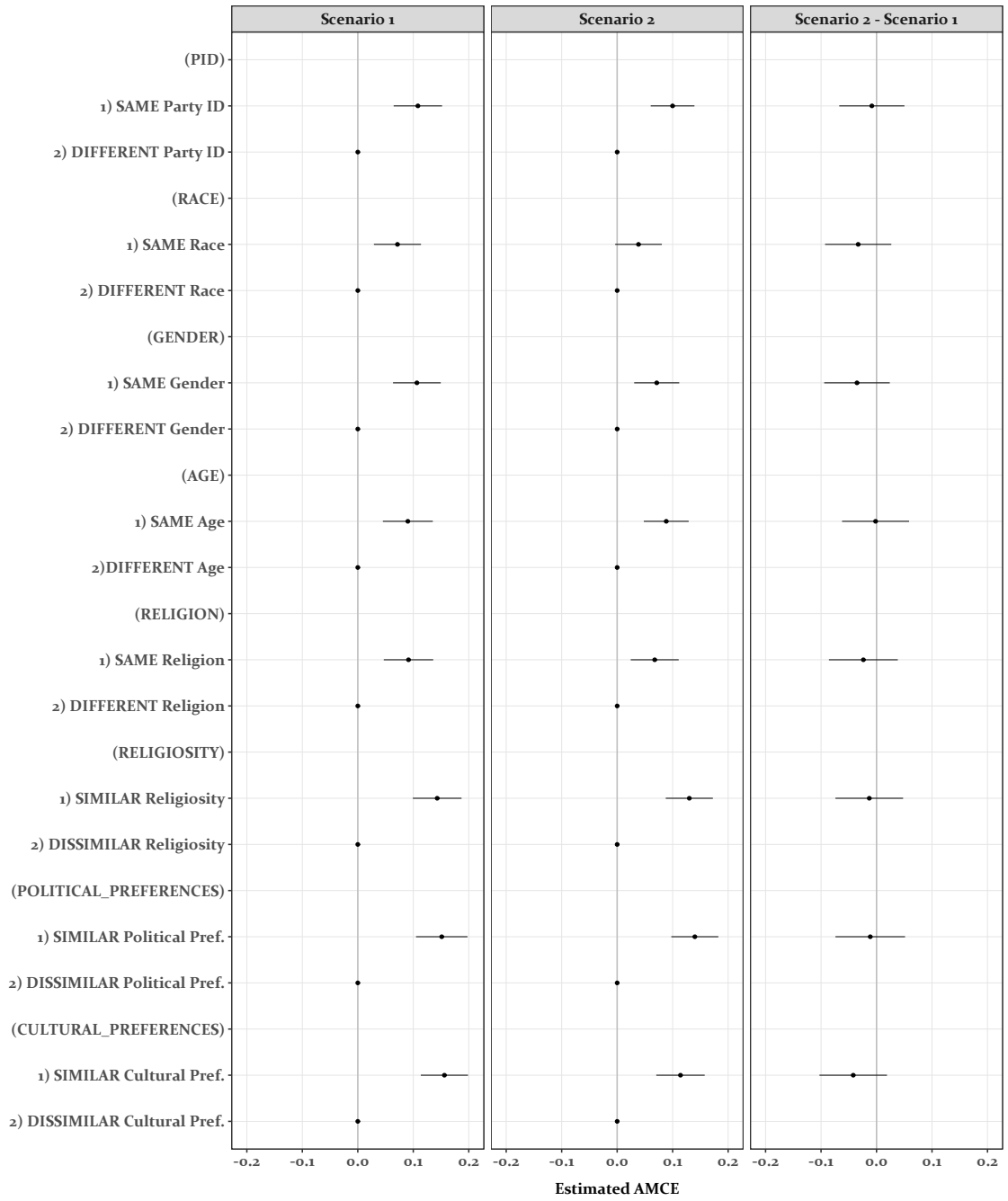
- Q. While answering questions, have you noticed that the reasons for choosing a partner among two other players changed every round?
- Yes
  - Yes, but I noticed after playing several rounds
  - No



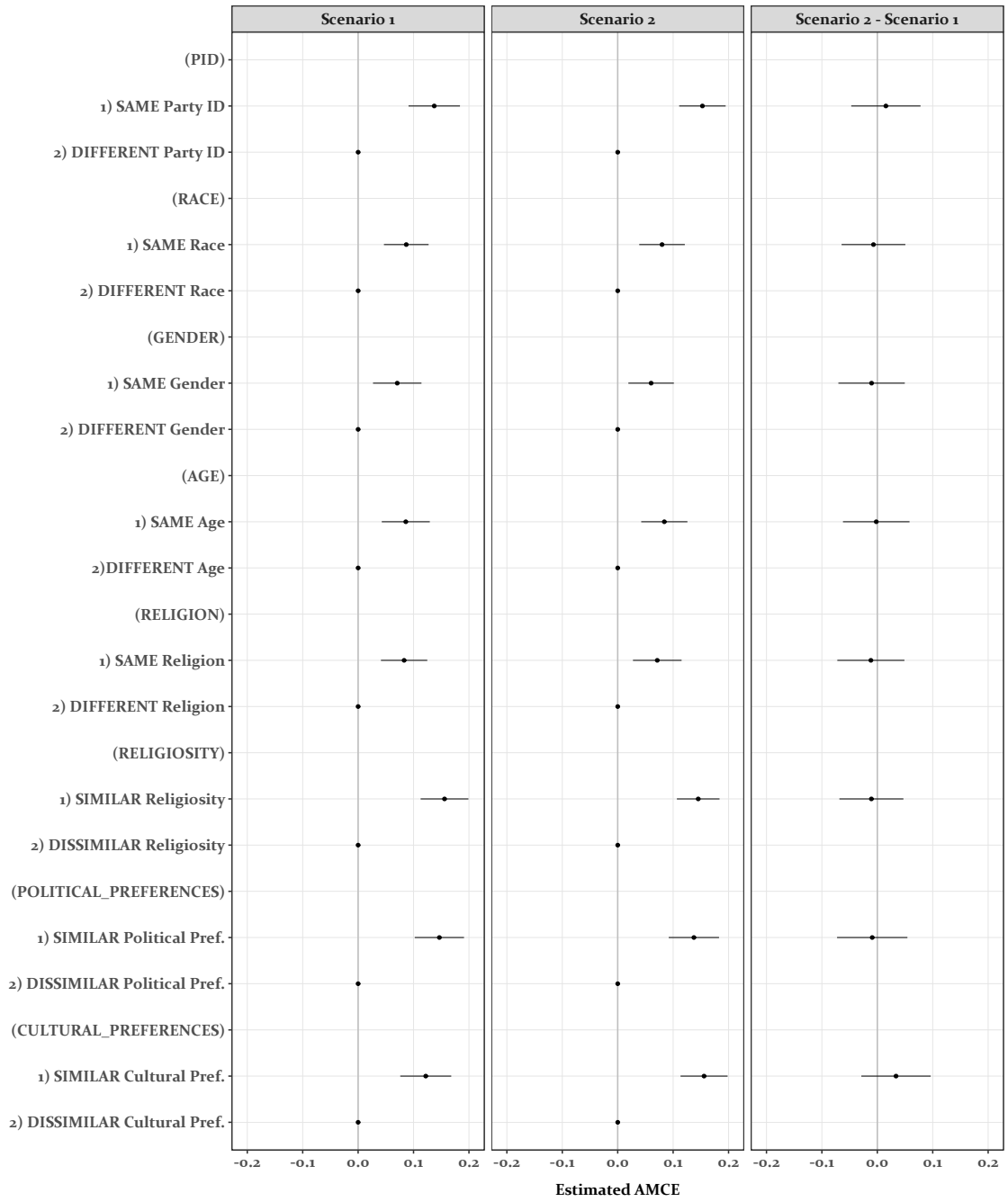
### Appendix D. Estimated AMCE results (Study 2a)



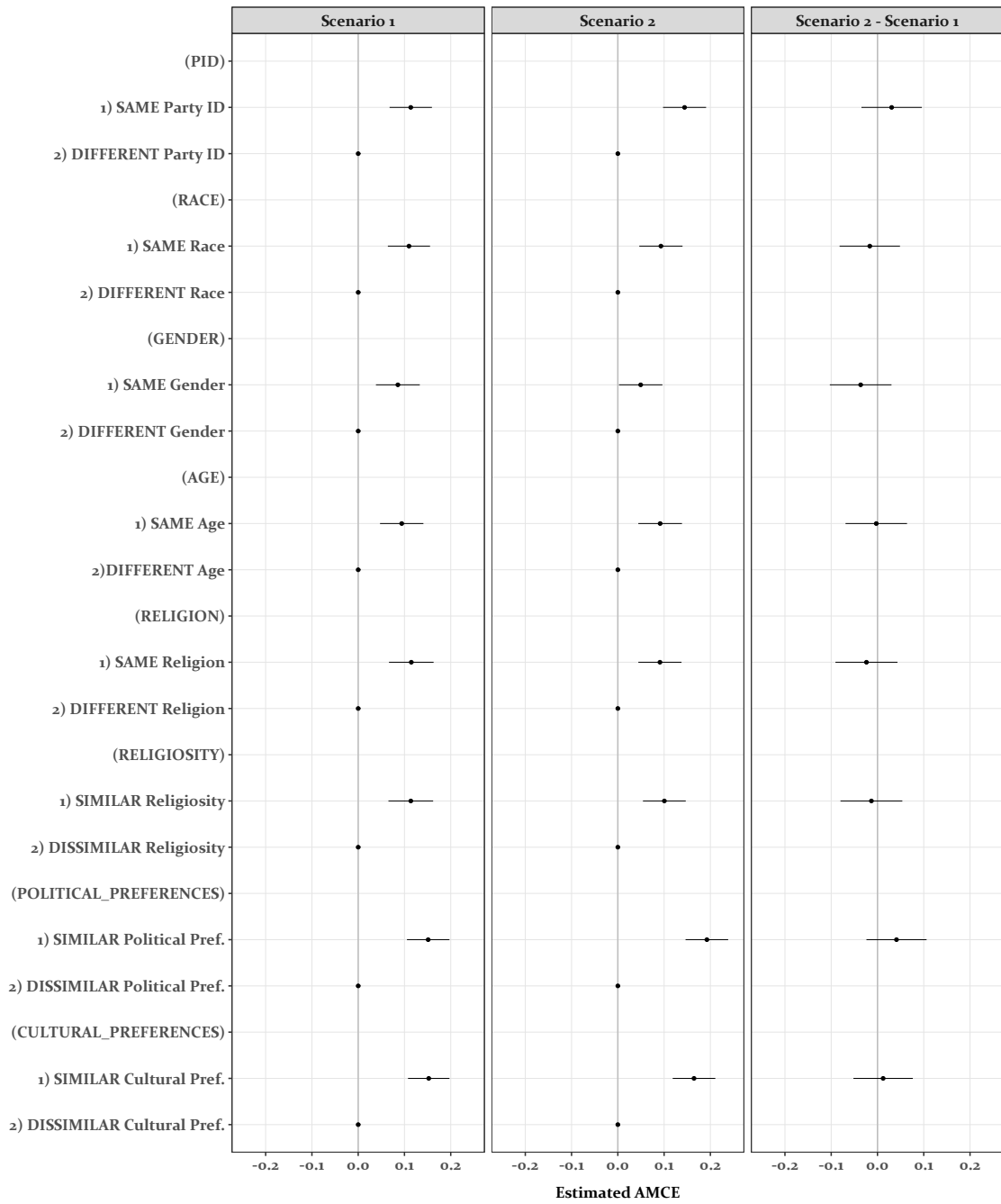
(a) Benevolence Statements



(b) Competence Statements



(c) Integrity Statements



(d) General Statements

Figure D1: Estimated AMCE for Scenario Subgroups by Description Statements

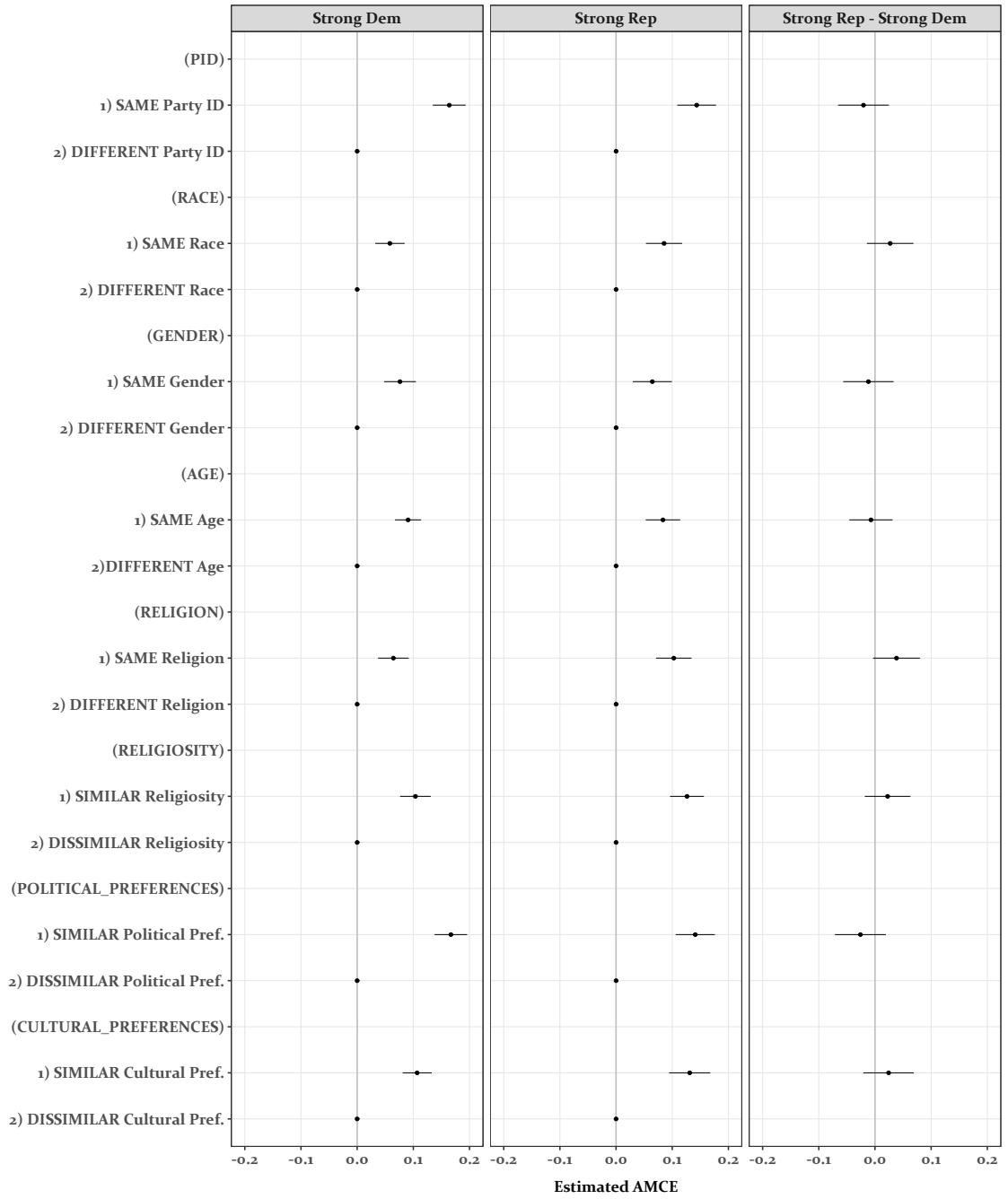
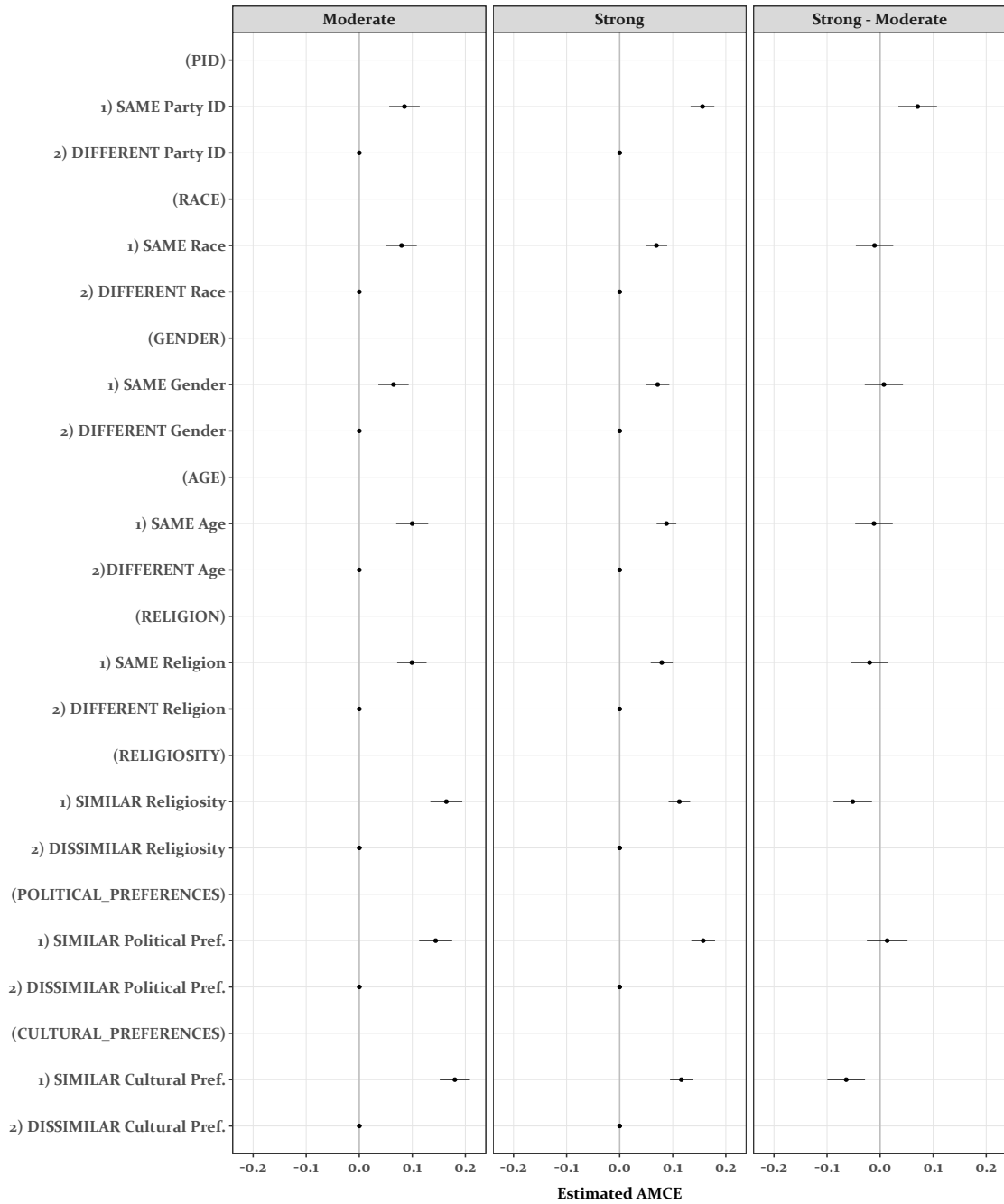


Figure D2: Estimated AMCEs for Subgroups by Participants' Party Identification



**Note:** The participants are grouped into moderate party identifiers (Moderate) and strong party identifiers (Strong), regardless of their party identity. 2,509 choices between 5,018 simulated confederates were made by the moderate party identifiers, and 4,698 choices between 9,396 simulated confederates were made by the strong party identifiers.

Figure D3: Estimated AMCEs for Subgroups by Participants' Strength of Partisanship

## Appendix E. Study 2b Questionnaire

### Section 1: Demographics

We would like to learn about you. Please answer the questions following.

Q. Which of the following best describes your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Nonbinary
- Other

Q. How old are you?

Q. Which of the following best describes your own background in racial and ethnic terms? Please select all that apply.

- Black or African American
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Native American or American Indian
- Middle Eastern
- Other

Q. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have completed?

- Some high school, but no degree
- High school degree
- Some college, but no degree
- Associate's or Bachelor's degree
- Some graduate school, but no degree
- Graduate degree (e.g., MA, PhD, MD, or JD)
- Other

Q. Which of the following best describes your party affiliation?

- Strong Democrat
- Democrat

- Independent, but I lean Democrat
- Independent
- Independent, but I lean Republican
- Republican
- Strong Republican

Q. Which of the following best describes your religious preference?

- Catholic
- Other Christian (e.g. Protestant, Greek Orthodox, or Mormon)
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Other
- Agnostic
- Atheist
- Nothing in particular

Q. Which of the following best describes your ideology?

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Moderate, but lean liberal
- Moderate
- Moderate, but lean conservative
- Conservative
- Very conservative

## **Section 2: Profile construction questions**

We are now going to move on to the questionnaire designed to measure other dimensions of your personality. This questionnaire has been designed to solicit your opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about various topics. Our algorithms will then use your responses to partner you with other players. As part of this questionnaire, you will see questions about your entertainment preferences, political ideology, religious practices, policy preferences, and social attitudes. Some of your responses will



be used to generate an information profile about you that is anonymously shared with other players after this section.

Q. Please select all of the activities that you have done over the last 12 months.

- Voted in an election
- Contacted a politician or government official
- Worked for a political party or action group
- Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker
- Signed a petition
- Taken part in a lawful public demonstration
- Boycotted certain products
- Posted or shared anything about politics online
- Other
- None of these

Q. Which of the following do you think are the three most important problems the United States is facing today?

- Dissatisfaction with government / poor leadership
- Immigration / illegal aliens
- Race relations / racism
- Unifying the country / divisions in country
- Healthcare
- Environmental concerns / pollution / global warming
- The media
- Guns / gun control
- Education
- Crime / Violence / Justice System
- Welfare
- Religious / Family Decline
- Lack of respect for each other
- The economy, in general
- Unemployment
- Distribution of wealth / inequality / poverty

- Federal budget deficit / federal debt / government spending
- Taxes
- Corporate corruption
- Foreign policy, in general
- National security / defense
- Foreign trade, in general
- International issues
- Terrorism / war
- Others
- Ethics / Moral Decline
- Public health

Q. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others are not as interested. Which best describes how often you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Only now and then
- Hardly at all
- Don't know

Q. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- People like me do not have any say about what the government does.
- Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on.
- Voting is the only way that a person like me can have any say about how the government runs things.

Q. How much trust do you have in the following institutions of the United States? When answering these questions, we want you to think of the systems and institutions in general instead of the specific persons currently holding positions. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- Presidency

- Congress
- Supreme Court
- Overall democratic system
- National election process

Q. How much trust do you have in following specific officeholders or events? When answering these questions, we want you to think of specific person(s) serving political roles in the United States. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- President Donald Trump
- Current members of Congress
- Current members of the Supreme Court
- Most recent election results in 2018

Q. Which are your three favorite types of music?

- EDM (Electronic Dance Music)
- Rock/Indie rock music
- Jazz
- Dubstep
- R&B and soul
- Techno
- Country music
- Electro
- Pop music
- Blues music
- Hip hop
- Latin
- Classical music
- World music (e.g., K-pop, J-pop)
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite genres of fiction books?

- Adventure
- Classics
- Comic/Graphic novels

- Crime/Detective
- Fantasy
- Historical fiction
- Horror
- Humor
- Mystery
- Poetry
- Romance
- Satire
- Science fiction
- Short story
- Spy fiction
- Superhero fiction
- Suspense/Thriller
- Travel
- Western
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite genres of non-fiction books?

- Art
- Biography/Autobiography
- Business
- Cooking
- Health
- History
- Philosophy
- Politics
- Religion
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Travel
- True Crime

- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite types of films?

- Action
- Adventure
- Cartoon/Animation
- Children/Family
- Classics
- Comedy
- Crime
- Documentary
- Drama
- History
- Horror
- Independent
- International
- Military/War
- Music/Musicals
- Romance
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Superhero
- Thriller/Mystery
- Western
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite types of television shows?

- Action
- Adventure
- Cartoon/Animation
- Children/Family
- Comedy

- Crime
- Documentary
- Drama
- Game shows
- History
- Horror
- International
- Military/War
- Music/Musicals
- Reality TV
- Romance
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Talk shows
- Teen
- Thriller/Mystery
- Western
- Sitcom
- Soap operas
- None of the above

Q. Which style of clothes do you prefer the most?

- Classically cut and good value for your money
- Modest and appropriate
- Daring and out of the ordinary
- Comfortable
- Chic and stylish
- Other

Q. How important is religion in your life?

- Very important
- Somewhat important

- Not too important
- Not at all important

Q. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- A few times a year
- Seldom
- Never

### **Section 3: Social trust 1 (General public)**

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your **views on** people generally. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- Most people in this society are trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with people.
- Most people would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance.
- Most of the time, people mostly look out for themselves.
- When they face temptations, people are not very honest.
- Human nature is basically good, and people can be trusted.
- People benefit in the long run if they are honest and fair in their dealings with others.

### **Section 4: Social trust 2 (Online friends)**

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your **views on** the people you consider "online friends," such as your Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter friends. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- Most of my online friends are trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with my online friends.
- Most of my online friends would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance.
- Most of the time, my online friends mostly look out for themselves.

- When they face temptations, my online friends are not very honest.

### **Section 5: Social trust 3 (General online public)**

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your views on the people with whom you interact online more generally—that is online interactions with people that you do not know well or consider friends. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- Most people online are trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with people online.
- Most people online would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance.
- Most of the time, people online mostly look out for themselves.
- When they face temptations, people online are not very honest.

### **Section 6: Other questions (News sharing pattern, offline interactions)**

Q. In the past 24 hours, have you ... (Answer choices: Yes (1) No (2))

- Watched TV News
- Read a newspaper in print or online
- Listened to a radio news or talk show
- Read a news blog

Q. Do your family members and/or friends share news articles with you? (Answer choices: Yes (1) No (2))

Q. [*Display This Question: If Do your family members and/or friends share news articles with you? = Yes*] How often do the people who send you these articles generally agree with your own political views?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Sometimes
- Never

Q. [*Display This Question: If Do your family members and/or friends share news articles with you? = Yes*] How do they share the article(s) with you? Check as many as apply.



- Through email
- Through text message
- Posted on their Facebook/Twitter timeline
- Through Facebook/Twitter messenger
- Other

Q. Do you share news articles with your family members and/or friends? (Answer choices: Yes (1) No (2))

- Yes
- No

Q. How often do you interact offline with the people that you interact with online during non-COVID times?

- Always
- Most of the time
- About half the time
- Sometimes
- Never

### **Section 7: Partner Profile**

Later in this study, you will be playing a series of games with another participant (“Partner”). You and the other player (“Partner”) will work on a series of simple exercises together. Your Partner has been assigned randomly. In other words, he/she may be a lot like you or may not.

To learn about your Partner, we will provide some information about your Partner to tell you whether you two are the same or different on age, gender, political party identification, race, and religion. In addition, we used you and your Partner’s answers to create three additional measures comparing you to your Partner:

**Political Preferences:** How well your positions on the various political issues and policies we asked about match with those of your Partner. **Cultural Preferences:** How well your preferences for books, clothes, music, films, and television programs match with those of your Partner. **Religiosity:** How well the intensity of your religious practices matches with that of your Partner.

[Display a partner profile]

## Section 8: Flashcard Exercise

Now, you will see 13 simple questions asking for your preference or opinions. **There are no right or wrong answers to the questions**, so please answer with your intuition.

You will have **10 seconds to answer each question**. You can move on to the next question after 3-4 seconds if you made a choice.

Q. Which one do you prefer?

- iPhone
- Android

Q. Which one do you prefer?

- Cat
- Dog

Q. Which one do you prefer?

- Summer
- Winter

Q. Which one do you prefer?

- Book
- Movie

Q. Do you think America's economy will do better this year compared to last year?

- Yes
- No

Q. Do you think society is getting better?

- Yes
- No

Q. Do you agree that global warming is due to human activities?

- Yes
- No

Q. Which way do you prefer to read news?

- Online or Smartphone (e.g., news website, smartphone application)
- Offline (e.g., newspaper, television, radio)

Q. In your opinion, what is a more serious problem in journalism?

- Fake news
- Politically biased news

Q. In your opinion, of which of the following social issues does the U.S. government need to prioritize?

- Improving educational system
- Reducing health care costs

Q. Do you support gun control?

- Yes
- No

Q. Do you support same sex marriage?

- Yes
- No

Q. Do you agree with the following statement: I feel comfortable accepting friend requests from strangers in social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

- Yes
- No

[Display flashcard exercise result]

### **Section 9: Post-treatment questions**

Now, in order to assign you a series of exercises that you will be playing with the player partnered up with you, please answer the following questions.

Q. Please signal how interested you are in doing the following with your current partner.

- Reading news articles shared by your current Partner
- Accepting friend requests from your current Partner on social media platforms
- Having a conversation on political issues with your current Partner
- Having a conversation on cultural topics (e.g., food, music, movie) with your current Partner

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your **views on** your current Partner. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements based on the information provided.

- My current Partner is trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with my current Partner.
- My current Partner would try to take advantage of me if he/she got a chance.
- Most of the time, my current Partner mostly looks out for himself/herself.
- When he/she faces temptations, my current Partner is not very honest.

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your **views on** the people you consider “online friends,” such as your Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter friends. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- Most of my online friends are trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with my online friends.
- Most of my online friends would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance.
- Most of the time, my online friends mostly look out for themselves.
- When they face temptations, my online friends are not very honest.

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your **views on** the people with whom you interact online more generally—that is online interactions with people that you do not know well or consider friends. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- Most people online are trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with people online.
- Most people online would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance.
- Most of the time, people online mostly look out for themselves.
- When they face temptations, people online are not very honest.

Q. How believable did you find your partner? (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Highly Believable (1) to Highly Unbelievable (7))

## Appendix F. Study 3 Questionnaire

### Section 1: Demographics

*The same set of questions with Study 2b Section 1.*

### Section 2: Profile construction questions

We are now going to move on to the questionnaire designed to measure other dimensions of your personality.

This questionnaire has been designed to solicit your opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about various topics. Our algorithms will then use your responses to partner you with other players.

As part of this questionnaire, you will see questions about your entertainment preferences, political ideology, religious practices, policy preferences, and social attitudes.

Some of your responses will be used to generate an information profile about you that is anonymously shared with other players after this section.

Q. Please select all of the activities that you have done over the last 12 months.

- Voted in an election
- Contacted a politician or government official
- Worked for a political party or action group
- Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker
- Signed a petition
- Taken part in a lawful public demonstration
- Boycotted certain products
- Posted or shared anything about politics online
- Other
- None of these

Q. Which of the following do you think are the three most important problems the United States is facing today?

- Dissatisfaction with government
- Immigration / illegal aliens

- Race relations, including racism
- Divisions in country
- Healthcare
- Environmental concerns (e.g., global warming, pollution)
- The media
- Guns and gun control
- Education
- Welfare
- Family and religious decline
- Lack of respect for each other
- Economy in general
- Unemployment
- Distribution of wealth (e.g., inequality, poverty)
- Corporate corruption
- Foreign policy
- National security and defense
- Foreign trade
- International issues
- War and terrorism
- Ethics and moral decline
- Public health (e.g., COVID-19 epidemic)
- Criminal justice and law enforcement systems
- Others

[Display this question: Which of the following do you think are the three most important problems the United States is facing today? != Race relations, including racism, healthcare, economy in general, unemployment, distribution of wealth (e.g., inequality, poverty), public health (e.g., COVID-19 epidemic), criminal justice and law enforcement systems]] Previous public survey results showed that the American public considers the economy, public health, and race relations are the three most important problems the United States is facing today. Among these three, which one do you consider to be the most imminent problem?

- Economy

- Public health
- Race relations

Q. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on
- People like me don't have any say about what the government does
- I don't think public officials care much what people like me think

Q. How much trust do you have in the following institutions of the United States? When answering these questions, we want you to think of the systems and institutions in general instead of the specific persons currently holding positions. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- Presidency
- Congress
- Supreme Court
- Overall democratic system
- National election process

Q. How much trust do you have in following specific officeholders or events? When answering these questions, we want you to think of specific person(s) serving political roles in the United States. (Answer choices range from 1 (No trust at all) to 7 (Complete trust))

- President Joe Biden
- Current members of Congress
- Current members of the Supreme Court
- Most recent election results in 2020

Q. Which are your three favorite types of music?

- EDM (Electronic Dance Music)
- Rock/Indie rock music
- Jazz
- Dubstep
- R&B and soul
- Techno

- Country music
- Electro
- Pop music
- Blues music
- Hip hop
- Latin
- Classical music
- World music (e.g., K-pop, J-pop)
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite genres of fiction books?

- Adventure
- Classics
- Comic/Graphic novels
- Crime/Detective
- Fantasy
- Historical fiction
- Horror
- Humor
- Mystery
- Poetry
- Romance
- Satire
- Science fiction
- Short story
- Spy fiction
- Superhero fiction
- Suspense/Thriller
- Travel
- Western
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite genres of non-fiction books?



- Art
- Biography/Autobiography
- Business
- Cooking
- Health
- History
- Philosophy
- Politics
- Religion
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Travel
- True Crime
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite types of films?

- Action
- Adventure
- Cartoon/Animation
- Children/Family
- Classics
- Comedy
- Crime
- Documentary
- Drama
- History
- Horror
- Independent
- International
- Military/War
- Music/Musicals
- Romance

- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Superhero
- Thriller/Mystery
- Western
- None of the above

Q. Which are your three favorite types of television shows?

- Action
- Adventure
- Cartoon/Animation
- Children/Family
- Comedy
- Crime
- Documentary
- Drama
- Game shows
- History
- Horror
- International
- Military/War
- Music/Musicals
- Reality TV
- Romance
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Science/Nature
- Sports
- Talk shows
- Teen
- Thriller/Mystery
- Western

- Sitcom
- Soap operas
- None of the above

Q. Which style of clothes do you prefer the most?

- Classically cut and good value for your money
- Modest and appropriate
- Daring and out of the ordinary
- Comfortable
- Chic and stylish
- Other

Q. How important is religion in your life?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not too important
- Not at all important

Q. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- A few times a year
- Seldom
- Never

Q. In the past 24 hours, have you ... (Answer choices: Yes (1) No (2))

- Watched TV News
- Read a newspaper in print or online
- Listened to a radio news, talk show, or podcasts
- Read a news blog

### **Section 3: Partner Profile**

*The same instruction with Study 2b Section 7.*

### **Section 4: Flashcard Exercise**

*The same instruction and set of questions with Study 2b Section 8.*

### **Section 5: Pre-treatment social trust questions**

Q. Please signal how interested you are in doing the following with your current partner.

- Reading news articles shared by your current Partner
- Accepting friend requests from your current Partner on social media platforms
- Having a conversation on political issues with your current Partner
- Having a conversation on cultural topics (e.g., food, music, movie) with your current Partner
- Having a conversation on religious topics with your current Partner

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your views on your current Partner. Please signal how much you agree or disagree with the following statements based on the information provided.

- My current Partner is trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with my current Partner.
- My current Partner would try to take advantage of me if he/she got a chance.
- Most of the time, my current Partner mostly looks out for himself/herself.
- When he/she faces temptations, my current Partner is not very honest.

### **Section 6: Article selection**

You are now going to have more interactions with your partner.

You and your partner will each be given a different set of six articles on various issues, such as culture, business, economy, and politics. You will interact more with your partner as you proceed.

Q. You are selected to read articles on culture. The following is the list of article titles. Select one article that you would like to send your partner to read. You can read the articles by clicking the titles below. You can return to this page by clicking the "Return" button at the bottom of the article page.

- 'Black Widow' joins the streaming battle, but nobody's sure what winning looks like
- Audiences for award shows are in steep decline. This chart shows how far viewership has fallen

- 'Long Live Rock' celebrates hard rock's communal vibe but downplays its excess
- Older artists are the havens of music investing
- AI photo restoration shines a light on life in old Ireland
- A photographer secretly snapped strangers' text messages and turned them into art

Write a message that you would like to send to your partner with the article you selected above. (Please keep your message short: three or fewer sentences are recommended)

**Section 7: Treatment article from the partner**

This is the article your Partner sent. Click [HERE](#) to read the article. (Hyperlinked to the treatment article)

Your partner's message: "Interesting article to read. I found this article to deliver fair and reasonable points and arguments."

**Section 8: Post-treatment questions 1 (Related to the shared article)**

The following questions are going to be about the article shared by your partner.

- Q. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much do you agree with the article? (Answer choice in a 7-point scale: Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (7))
- Q. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much did you know about the [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021/ George Floyd Justice in Policing Act] and its assessments before reading the article? (Answer choice in a 7-point scale: Did not know at all (1) to Perfectly knew (7))
- Q. On a scale of 1 to 7, how convincing was the article to you? (Answer choice in a 7-point scale: Completely not convincing (1) to Completely convincing (7))
- Q. How likely would you be to share the article with the following people? (Answer choice in a 7-point scale: Definitely not share (1) to Definitely share (7))
  - Family
  - Close friends
  - People in your online networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)

**Section 9: Trust-related questions (political trust, trust in the partner)**

- Q. How much trust do you have in following specific officeholders of the United States to han-

dle the issues related to the [economy/public health/race relations]. When answering these questions, we want you to think of specific person(s) serving political roles in the United States. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: No trust at all (1) to Complete trust (7))

- President Joe Biden
- Current members of Congress
- Current members of the Supreme Court

Q. How much trust do you have in following institutions of the United States to handle the issues related to the [economy/public health/race relations]? When answering these questions, we want you to think of the systems and institutions in general instead of the specific persons currently holding positions. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: No trust at all (1) to Complete trust (7))

- Presidency
- Congress
- Supreme Court

Q. How much trust do you have in the following institutions of the United States? When answering these questions, we want you to think of the **systems and institutions** in general instead of the specific persons currently holding positions. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: No trust at all (1) to Complete trust)

- Presidency
- Congress
- Supreme Court
- Overall democratic system
- National election process

Q. How much trust do you have in following specific officeholders or events? When answering these questions, we want you to think of **specific person(s) serving political roles** in the United States. (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: No trust at all (1) to Complete trust)

- President Joe Biden
- Current members of Congress
- Current members of the Supreme Court
- Most recent election results in 2020

Q. How **interested** are you in doing the following with your **current partner**. (Answer choices

in a 7-point scale: Completely not interested (1) to Completely interested (7))

- Reading news articles shared by your current Partner
- Accepting friend requests from your current Partner on social media platforms
- Having a conversation on political issues with your current Partner
- Having a conversation on cultural topics (e.g., food, music, movie) with your current Partner
- Having a conversation on religious topics with your current Partner

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your views on your **current Partner**. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements based on the information provided? (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- My current Partner is trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with my current Partner.
- My current Partner would try to take advantage of me if he/she got a chance.
- Most of the time, my current Partner mostly looks out for himself/herself.
- When he/she faces temptations, my current Partner is not very honest.

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your views on **people generally**. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- Most people in this society are trustworthy.
- I can't be too careful in dealing with people.
- Most people would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance.
- Most of the time, people mostly look out for themselves.
- When they face temptations, people are not very honest.
- Human nature is basically good, and people can be trusted.
- People benefit in the long run if they are honest and fair in their dealings with others.

Q. Now we are going to ask you some questions regarding your views on the **people with whom you interact online more generally**—that is online interactions with people that you do not know well or consider friends. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Answer choices in a 7-point scale: Do not agree at all (1) to Completely agree (7))

- Most people online are trustworthy.

- I can't be too careful in dealing with people online.
- Most people online would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance.
- Most of the time, people online mostly look out for themselves.
- When they face temptations, people online are not very honest.

**Section 10: Dummy questions 1 (culture-related)**

Q. The following is the list of movies that were nominated to the best picture for the Oscar this year, in alphabetical order. Please select the ones **you've watched** or **are interested in watching**.

- Judas and the Black Messiah
- Mank
- Minari
- Nomadland
- Promising Young Woman
- Sound of Metal
- The Father
- The Trial of the Chicago 7
- None of the above

Q. The following is the list of songs that were nominated to the top song for the 2021 Billboard Music Awards, in alphabetical order. Please select the ones **you've listened to** or **are interested in listening**.

- "Adore You" (Harry Styles)
- "B.S." (Jhené Aiko ft. H.E.R.)
- "Bang!" (AJR)
- "Blinding Lights" (The Weeknd)
- "Breaking Me" (Topic & A7S)
- "Chasin' You" (Morgan Wallen)
- "Don't Start Now" (Dua Lipa)
- "Dynamite" (BTS)
- "Go Crazy" (Chris Brown & Young Thug)
- "Got What I Got" (Jason Aldean)



- “Heat Waves” (Glass Animals)
- “I Hope” (Gabby Barrett ft. Charlie Puth)
- “ily (i love you baby)” (Surf Mesa ft. Emilee)
- “Intentions” (Justin Bieber ft. Quavo)
- “Level of Concern” (twenty one pilots)
- “Life Is Good” (Future ft. Drake)
- “Monsters” (All Time Low ft. blackbear)
- “Mood” (24kGoldn ft. iann dior)
- “More Than My Hometown” (Morgan Wallen)
- “my ex’s best friend” (Machine Gun Kelly ft. blackbear)
- “One of Them Girls” (Lee Brice)
- “Rain on Me” (Lady Gaga & Ariana Grande)
- “ROCKSTAR” (DaBaby ft. Roddy Ricch)
- “Roses (Imanbek Remix)” (SAINT JHN)
- “Savage” (Megan Thee Stallion)
- “Say So” (Doja Cat)
- “Stupid Love” (Lady Gaga)
- “WAP” (Cardi B ft. Megan Thee Stallion)
- “WHATS POPPIN” (Jack Harlow ft. DaBaby, Tory Lanez, & Lil Wayne)
- None of the above

Q. The following is the list of the 20 most-streamed TV shows of 2020, in alphabetical order.

Please select the ones **you’ve watched** or **are interested in watching**.

- Boss Baby: Back in Business (Netflix)
- Criminal Minds (Netflix)
- Grey’s Anatomy (Netflix)
- Longmire (Netflix)
- Lucifer (Netflix)
- NCIS (Netflix)
- New Girl (Netflix)
- Ozark (Netflix)
- Schitt’s Creek (Netflix)

- Shameless (Netflix)
- Supernatural (Netflix)
- The Blacklist (Netflix)
- The Crown (Netflix)
- The Great British Baking Show (Netflix)
- The Mandalorian (Disney+)
- The Office (Netflix)
- The Umbrella Academy (Netflix)
- The Vampire Diaries (Netflix)
- Tiger King (Netflix)
- You (Netflix)
- None of the above

Q. The following is the list of the 2020 New York Times bestsellers, the Barnes & Noble best-selling list, and Amazon's bestsellers, in alphabetical order. Select all the ones **you've read** or **are interested in reading**.

- A Good Girl's Guide to Murder (Holly Jackson)
- A Promised Land (Barack Obama)
- American Dirt (Jeanine Cummins)
- Deacon King Kong (James McBride)
- Forgiving What You Can't Forget (Lysa Terkeurst)
- Greenlights (Matthew McConaughey)
- Home Body (Rupi Kaur)
- In Five Years (Rebecca Serle)
- Lady in the Lake (Laura Lippman)
- Leave the World Behind (Rumaan Alam)
- Midnight Sun (Stephanie Meyer)
- One by One (Ruth Ware)
- Our Time is Now (Stacey Abrams)
- Ready Player Two (Ernest Cline)
- The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes (Suzanne Collins)
- The Girl with the Louding Voice (Abi Daré)

- The Glass Hotel (Emily St. John Mandel)
- The Guest List (Lucy Foley)
- The Return (Nicholas Sparks)
- The Vanishing Half (Brit Bennett)
- Untamed (Glennon Doyle)
- None of the above

**Section 11: Dummy questions 2 (news sharing behaviors)**

- Q. Do your family members and/or friends share news articles with you? (Answer choice: Yes (1) No (2))
- Q. How often do the people who send you these articles generally agree with your own political views? (Answer choice in a 5-point scale: Always (1) to Never (5))
- Q. Do you share news articles with your family members and/or friends? (Answer choice: Yes (1) No (2))
- Q. How often do you send articles generally agree with your own political views to your close social network? (Answer choice in a 5-point scale: Always (1) to Never (5))
- Q. How believable did you find your partner? (Answer choice in a 7-point scale: Highly Believable (1) to Highly Unbelievable (7))

## Appendix G. Non-Treatment Articles (Study 3)

### Article 1:

#### **'Black Widow' joins the streaming battle, but nobody's sure what winning looks like**

Disney has announced that “Black Widow,” the eagerly anticipated Marvel prequel starring Scarlett Johansson, will receive a simultaneous streaming release via Disney+ in addition to hitting movie theaters in July. The announcement has unleashed a new round of discussion about what the right price should be for the privilege of watching such movies at home.

The related issue is that even studios remain unsure over how much they want to drive such viewing, given the sizable tradeoffs associated with promoting their streaming ventures at the expense of undermining movie-theater distribution, and the billion-dollar revenues that just one comic-book-style hit can generate.

What exactly does that tradeoff entail? The truth—and the problem—is that nobody precisely knows where the sweet spot is.

How many people crave the theatrical experience enough to bypass watching at home? How many movies can go to streaming without killing off theaters? What percentage of consumers who might not rush out to see “Black Widow” would pay to watch if all they have to do is push a few buttons to enjoy it with microwave popcorn on the couch?

The pandemic has fueled such experimentation, in part out of necessity. Still, doubt understandably lingers as to whether US theater attendance will come roaring back by the late spring or summer reflecting uncertainty over what the consumer market will look like in a few months' time, and the level of pent-up demand for out-of-home experiences.

“Black Widow” could provide one of the truer tests of that, coming out during the summer, when more people will likely view going to theaters as a more reasonable option.

The one indisputable fact is that Hollywood built up streaming during the pandemic while movie theaters sat dormant, sacrificing hundreds of millions of dollars in ticket sales. For the past year, amid delayed releases and fluctuating public-health news, streaming movies wasn't so much a mas-

ter plan as trying to make the best of a terrible situation.

The big bet now in this high-stakes poker game appears to be on the fall, hoping that movie-goers will be ready by then to resume old habits. At this point, though, the entertainment industry has probably never known less about audience preferences not in terms of content, necessarily, but the when, where, and how much. And consumers currently hold all the cards.

## **Article 2:**

### **Audiences for award shows are in steep decline. This chart shows how far viewership has fallen**

The Academy Awards are the biggest night for Hollywood, but fewer and fewer people outside that circle are tuning into the event. Last Sunday, viewership for the annual Oscars plunged to a new low, with 10.4 million people watching to find out which film took home the best picture prize, according to Nielsen data. That's a nearly 56% drop from the 23.6 million viewers that turned on their TVs for the program last year.

The drop in both metrics is not entirely surprising, as award shows, in general, have faced declining viewership in recent years. And few of the nominees were considered mainstream, given movie theaters have been largely shuttered for a year due to the pandemic.

So, are people becoming bored with big award ceremonies or are they just watching them differently?

Some argue that the inundation of too many live award show ceremonies has saturated the market and made top-tier award shows like the Grammys, Emmys, and Oscars less exciting to viewers. The Golden Globes, the Video Music Awards (VMAs), Billboard Music Awards, BET Awards, People Choice Awards, Critics Choice awards, and countless other ceremonies have all been televised in recent years. With such little curation, it wouldn't be surprising if viewers started to feel fatigued.

Not to mention, younger viewers, many of whom have cut cable, aren't as willing to sit through the traditional 16 to 20 minutes of commercials per hour that comes with a live TV telecast. A three-hour show like the Oscars can mean an hour worth of ads.

Then there are the nominees themselves. Nielsen's data shows that in the years where certain, more commercially popular, movies were nominated, more people tuned in. 2019's ceremony, which hit 29.6 million viewers, featured nominees from popular films like "Black Panther," "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "A Star is Born."

Of course, there's the possibility that people are watching these award ceremonies but are watching the programs differently. The Nielsen data doesn't include figures for viewers who opted to watch

any of the major award shows on streaming platforms.

Dan Rayburn, a media and streaming analyst, said one barrier is that the streaming industry hasn't yet agreed on a set definition of what a viewer is. Each streaming service has a different way of reporting how many people have watched a particular movie, TV show, or live program. This can make it difficult to make comparisons between platforms and between those platforms and traditional cable providers.

### **Article 3:**

#### **'Long Live Rock' celebrates hard rock's communal vibe but downplays its excess**

“Long Live Rock ... Celebrate the Chaos” exalts the communal nature of the hard rock, while mostly glossing over its excesses. The new documentary also misses a seemingly obvious coda that would have resonated after a year of shuttered live events—namely, the impact of Covid-19 on those who embrace this music with a level of adulation that one artist likens to Comic-Con every night.

Director Jonathan McHugh talks to an assortment of performers, from groups like Metallica, Korn, and Rage Against the Machine, as well as experts and fans for whom hard rock is their passion. Still, the documentary gives away its lack of objectivity with the subtitle “Celebrate the Chaos,” reveling in the sense of escape derived from collisions within mosh pits, with nary a mention of the number of hospital visits such pastimes might generate.

Instead, the academics focus on the tribal nature of the fan base and feelings of community, describing the bruising physical aspects of the associated rituals as a rite of passage. The bodies slamming together in mosh pits or the “wall of death” are really “a camaraderie thing,” says Korn lead singer Jonathan Davis, a way for attendees to “get their aggressions out.”

The one darker side explored involves drug use and overdose deaths by prominent artists—a relatively brief detour, in which Dr. Drew Pinsky (who built a reality-TV franchise around celebrity addiction) discusses the relationship between rock and chemical dependency.

McHugh alternately seems to have approached the film as a valentine to hard-rock fans and as a sociologist seeking to explain the music's customs to those who are strangers to it. The real missed opportunity, though, is in at least addressing the void left during a year in which the pandemic has deprived those profited from this form of expression due to the uniquely crowded, contact-oriented qualities of such events.

In one of the more interesting observations, Rage Against the Machine's Tom Morello cites the relationship between hard rock and societal change, stating, “No progressive, radical or revolutionary social movement has ever succeeded without a great soundtrack.”

There's possibly a provocative documentary in that, but “Long Live Rock” finally feels like an ode



to this tribal art form that doesn't possess much appeal, despite its intentions, to those outside the tribe.

## **Article 4:**

### **Older artists are the havens of music investing**

Bob Dylan, Stevie Nicks, and now Paul Simon. Older, established singers have sold their song catalogs for huge sums of money over the past year. A challenge for music investors is how to value newer acts.

Demand for music publishing assets—the rights to the underlying composition of a song—is growing among traditional record labels, buyout firms, and hedge funds. In 2020, \$4.67 billion of music catalogs changed hands globally, a 14% increase on 2019's tally based on data from analytics firm MIDiA.

Song catalogs can make good investments because of the royalty payments they generate and the diversity they add to portfolios. Every time a tune is played on a streaming platform like Spotify, or in a nightclub or bar, the rights owner is paid a fee. Streaming is boosting global music consumption and generating better data for calculating royalties. There are also bragging rights to owning a major hit.

The fattest checks have been written for older artists. Top acts from the 1960s and 1970s can now get payouts of more than 20 times their annual net royalties. A decade ago, music catalogs fetched 9.2 times on average, according to investment bank Shot Tower Capital.

As the songs of legendary singers grow expensive, investors will be tempted by newer performers or different genres like jazz. This is a cheaper but riskier strategy. Although music catalogs are sometimes compared to bonds, the income they generate can be volatile. Royalty payments are high soon after a song is released and then quickly decay.

The danger of overpaying for new music is therefore high. Unlike older song catalogs that have settled into an established pattern, it is trickier to model the future cash flows of fresh releases. And new music isn't growing as fast on digital platforms. Streams of tracks released in the 2000s are increasing at half the rate of songs from the 1960s, data cited by brokerage Jefferies shows.

One reason might be that older listeners have been relative latecomers to streaming and are now signing up and listening to familiar tunes. But younger generations are also discovering classics.

After a TikTok video that used Fleetwood Mac's 1977 track "Dreams" went viral last year, streams of the song shot up.

Of course, brave bets on today's acts could pay off spectacularly if they are still being listened to in 30 years' time. Investors that want a steadier beat can always stick with the classics.

## Article 5:

### **AI photo restoration shines a light on life in old Ireland**

Thousands of historical images from across Ireland are being brought to life in color for the first time, thanks to a new AI-led photo project. Combining digital technology with historical research, professors John Breslin and Sarah-Anne Buckley at the National University of Ireland, Galway, have been able to turn photos, originally shot in black and white, into rich color images.

The collection spans centuries and regions of Ireland, as well as the country's diaspora. It includes portraits of key figures like Oscar Wilde, as well as defining moments in history, like the Titanic setting sail from the Belfast shipyard where it was constructed. Yet, some of the most compelling photos depict everyday scenes—people herding pigs, spinning wool, or packed onto the back of horse-drawn carts.

The project, “Old Ireland in Colour,” uses a process known as deep learning that analyzes thousands of normal color photos and correlates colors to different shapes and textures to teach “what the colors should probably be” in black and white pictures.

AI has its limitations, however. There were certain idiosyncrasies to life in Ireland that the US-developed software was not trained to recognize. “An average kind of color (of a roof), around the world, might be a terracotta, an orange or a kind of a brownish-type tile,” Breslin said. “Whereas in Ireland, the roofs were typically slate, which is gray or black.”

This is where his collaborator, Buckley, who specializes in Irish social history, came in. They researched everything from clothing and pigments available in Ireland at the time, to the uniforms worn by various military units, before manually changing colors and shades based on what they found.

Despite the painstaking approach taken by the two researchers, photo colorization remains controversial among academics. Some historians believe AI software can produce misleading results that obfuscate, rather than enhance, the content of old photographs.

But Breslin argued that his images exist in addition to, not instead of, the originals. “We’re not vandalizing the negatives,” he said. “You can always go back and find the original photograph, and

throughout the book, we provide pointers to the original collection.”

Breslin hopes their project can help engage people who may not otherwise be interested in history. “We’re being bombarded with so much information, knowledge, bite-sized media, and content, so, for the younger generation particularly, it can be hard for history to compete,” Breslin said. “It’s important to be able to relate more to our history, and colorization definitely makes things more relatable.”

## **Article 6:**

### **A photographer secretly snapped strangers' text messages and turned them into art**

Before social distancing, it was easy to catch a glimpse of someone's text messages while waiting on a crowded subway platform or standing in line; allowing your eyes to linger a second longer than you should. Photographer Jeff Mermelstein has used this common impulse to create a series of photos, surreptitiously taken over the shoulders of strangers.

In a new book titled “#nyc,” after the hashtag Mermelstein used on his Instagram posts of the snaps, the collection of conversations is a touching, funny, and sometimes absurd look at how we communicate. The project also raises questions about privacy and photography: though the identities of the people in Mermelstein's images remain unknown, the conversations are often deeply intimate.

And while limited to a few anonymous lines, the texts are enough to fabricate entire stories based on the information in each shot: A pair of hands and a snippet of conversation on a screen tell stories of lovers arguing with unfiltered haphazard thoughts; friends sharing pregnancy announcements; and former flings asking to just be friends.

Sneaking photographs of sometimes painfully private texts can feel invasive—conversations can revolve around kinks and deep secrets, or raw emotions laid bare—but Mermelstein doesn't see it as being much different from traditional street photos.

Instead of gesture or expression, the things that street photographers normally seek, he is “exploring inner thoughts (through) words,” Mermelstein said. “So to me that is really exciting because it gives us a different kind of insight into who we are.”

“The manner of its voyeurism is different,” he said, comparing his work to other photos, like street portraits, taken in public spaces, often without the subject's knowledge or consent. “When we stand in front of a stranger... without conversation, without giving the person any clue as to who we are, and we take a photograph of them, that's quite voyeuristic.” He added: “There's this almost surprising relationship to more conventional street photography.”

Like street portraits, too, it's a way to step outside of our own experiences for a short while and think about what it would be like to live in another person's shoes. Sometimes it's the oddest moments

that leave their mark. Some pictures “still resonate and continue to grow on me, because of the mysterious ambiguity and absurdity and nonsense of it.”

## **Appendix H. Treatment Articles (Study 3)**

### **TOPIC 1 ECONOMY (PRO)**

#### **U.S. HOUSE, SENATE PASS PRESIDENT BIDEN’S HISTORIC RESCUE PLAN TO REBUILD AMERICA’S ECONOMY**

With the urging of the Biden administration, the House of Representatives and the Senate have passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The legislation is aimed at providing critical resources and making investments to rebuild America’s economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest contraction in U.S. GDP since World War II. At its peak, the unemployment rate rose to 14.7 percent and more than 20 million jobs disappeared, leaving 30-40 million Americans at risk of eviction. Statistics show that approximately 60% of U.S. businesses that closed since the start of the pandemic will stay shut permanently. Nationally, anywhere from \$34 billion to \$251 billion in healthcare costs have been spent to address the pandemic.

Among other things, the \$1.9 trillion stimulus package provides foundational funding to economically support individuals, state and local governments, and small businesses. Many experts are expressing positive assessments of the American Rescue Plan and applauding the Biden administration and Congress for their quick and decisive action.

Economists expect the legislation to lay the foundation for a strong and equitable economic recovery. Governors and mayors across the country have also expressed support for the financial assistance that will play a major role in supporting state and local governments, small businesses, hard-hit industries, various federal programs, and public education. In addition, public opinion polls indicate that a majority of both Democrats and Republicans support the new bill that provides direct payments, extended emergency employment benefits, and rental assistance to hard-hit Americans.

In addition to providing direct financial assistance, the new legislation is anticipated to boost the economy as a whole. A recent Reuters poll showed that 90 percent of U.S. economists believe the stimulus package will “significantly boost the economy” and 87 percent expect that the country will be back to pre-pandemic levels within a year. Gregory Daco, the chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics commented that “the package is priced right to boost the economy, spur job growth and



create an economic recovery that could potentially get to pre-pandemic levels by the third quarter of 2021.”

Representatives of many state and local governments, as well as those for the business community, have pledged to work closely with the Biden administration, U.S. Congress, and public policymakers in quickly and effectively implementing the American Rescue Plan to speed the country’s economic recovery.

## **TOPIC 1 ECONOMY (ANTI)**

### **U.S. HOUSE, SENATE PASS PRESIDENT BIDEN’S CONTROVERSIAL RESCUE PLAN TO REBUILD AMERICA’S ECONOMY**

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Among other things, the \$1.9 trillion stimulus package aims to provide foundational funding to economically support individuals, state and local governments, and small businesses. Despite its intention, many experts are expressing concerns about the American Rescue Plan and are critical of the Biden administration and Congress for moving so quickly on such an expensive and complicated piece of legislation.

Economists are concerned that the legislation’s price tag will ultimately burden Americans, pointing out that the Biden administration and Congress have not yet reached a consensus on how to fund it. Without proper sources of funding, experts warn that the legislation will only increase the national debt, resulting in a return to a slow-growing economy in the near future. The Congressional Budget Office concluded in its 2020 budget outlook that “the growing debt burden also raises borrowing costs, slowing the growth of the economy and national income, and it increases the risk of a fiscal crisis or a gradual decline in the value of Treasury securities.”

In addition to concerns about the pace of economic growth, experts expressed worries about the possibility of inflation and an overheated economy due to the new legislation. James Pethokoukis, an economic policy analyst at the American Enterprise Institute, said that “high debt does make an economy more vulnerable to inflation and the unexpected.” Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming added that increases in mortgage rates, energy prices, and car payments “will be inevitable.”

Representatives of many state and local governments, as well as those for the business community, have pledged to continue raising their concerns to the Biden administration, U.S. Congress, and public policymakers to slow the implementation of the American Rescue Plan in ways they believe will more effectively lead to the country's economic recovery.

## **TOPIC 2 PUBLIC HEALTH/HEALTHCARE (PRO)**

### **U.S. HOUSE, SENATE PASS PRESIDENT BIDEN’S HISTORIC RESCUE PLAN TO MODERNIZE THE NATION’S PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM**

With the urging of the Biden administration, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This legislation is aimed at providing critical resources and making investments in many public health programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that America was not fully prepared for a public health crisis. Health systems said they were not able to incorporate required data collection into their existing processes as health facilities used outdated communication methods, like fax machines, and different systems that do not allow for the seamless exchange of data. The inability to quickly share test results and data on the spread and severity of the virus slowed the response to COVID-19 and endangered our communities.

Among other things, this legislation provides foundational funding to support public health data infrastructure modernization initiatives and data surveillance. Many experts are expressing positive assessments of the American Rescue Plan and applauding the Biden administration and Congress for their quick and decisive action.

Public health officials expect the legislation to play a crucial role in helping every American “attain the highest level of health possible.” CDC officials have expressed support for the data modernization initiatives that will generally improve America’s healthcare system by helping to identify priority public health needs and better allocate resources through more accurate predictive analytics and forecasting. Experts anticipate that the efforts to modernize America’s disease warning system will help track and fight any future biological threats, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the modernization of public health-related data and systems, the new legislation is anticipated to make healthcare more proactive as it allows healthcare providers to intervene more quickly when health issues arise. Thomas Kiesau, the director and digital health leader of the advisory firm The Chartis Group, pointed out that physicians will get real-time data from patients to better monitor their health status, making interventions more “timely and more context-aware.” This will help to not only handle any possible public health pandemic in the future more effectively

but also provide efficiency in day-to-day healthcare service and the construction of the public health system.

Representatives of many public health officials and experts in the medical community have pledged to work closely with the Biden administration, U.S. Congress, and public policymakers in quickly and effectively implementing the American Rescue Plan to improve the public health system through advancing information and technology.

## **TOPIC 2 PUBLIC HEALTH/HEALTHCARE (ANTI)**

### **U.S. HOUSE, SENATE PASS PRESIDENT BIDEN'S CONTROVERSIAL RESCUE PLAN TO MODERNIZE THE NATION'S PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM**

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Among other things, this legislation aims to provide foundational funding to support public health data infrastructure modernization initiatives and data surveillance. Despite its intention, many experts are expressing concerns about the American Rescue Plan and are critical of the Biden administration and Congress for moving so quickly on such an expensive and complicated piece of legislation.

Public health officials are concerned that cybersecurity can be a paramount problem as personal health information will be easily accessed by more people as a result of the legislation. James Carder, chief security officer for security company LogRhythm, pointed out that more cyberattacks targeting personal health data have been already observed in the last year—various health-related services, ranging from major hospital operators to COVID-19 contact tracing apps, all became the targets for hackers. Without well-prepared legal restrictions on the security protection of personal information, not only private information but also nationwide healthcare IT systems can be at risk.

In addition to concerns about the possible cybersecurity-related vulnerabilities, experts expressed worries about the remaining administrative hurdles in building nationwide digital health infrastructure. With different levels of regulations and cooperation across states, this legislation's attempt to create a national public health data infrastructure will likely fail. Reece Hirsch, co-head of the pri-

vacy and cybersecurity practice group at Morgan Lewis, warned that digital health platforms that connect with patients across states and regions can “really stop” without nationwide standards for how to collect and handle health-related data.

Representatives of many public health officials and experts in data security have pledged to continue raising their concerns to the Biden administration, U.S. Congress, and public policymakers to ensure higher security in collecting and handling personal data in ways they believe will improve public health through advanced information and technology.

### **TOPIC 3 RACE RELATIONS AND RACISM (PRO)**

#### **U.S. HOUSE PASSES PRESIDENT BIDEN'S HISTORIC PLAN TO REFORM THE NATION'S POLICING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEMS**

With the urging of the Biden administration, the House of Representatives passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. This legislation is aimed at reducing police violence against people of color, while also improving policing for everyone by reforming law enforcement agencies nationwide.

In recent years, police and prison reform initiatives have received increasing bipartisan and public support with statistical evidence showing that systemic racial discrimination by law enforcement is real. In 2020 alone, police killed nearly 600 people, with Black Americans killed at three times the rate of white people, even though Black Americans are 1.3 times less likely to be armed than white people. The racially biased law enforcement system has become the subject of reform.

Among other things, this policing act provides a foundation for a more transparent national database on policing and limitations on the measures police are allowed to use. Many experts are expressing positive assessments of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and applauding the Biden administration and Congress for their quick and decisive action.

Civil rights experts expect the legislation to directly combat police misconduct and the use of excessive force. Experts have expressed support for the expansion of the Justice Department's investigative powers and ability to pursue misconduct cases that will improve police accountability, transparency in policing practices, and police training and policies. Damon Hewitt, the executive vice president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, approved the bill to be "a well-established, intense standard and criminal law" that will be "game-changing."

In addition to the regulation of police power through federal law, the new legislation is anticipated to better identify and track police officers who abuse their powers by creating a national database for police misconduct. Nevada Attorney General Aaron D. Ford commented that such data would be especially important when identifying law enforcement agencies that have above-average rates of excessive force complaints, which can help identify at-risk law enforcement agencies before a devastating incident occurs. The creation of the national database and systematic changes that ensure abusive police officers don't receive jobs in new places can provide more grounds to fight against



systemic racism rooted in law enforcement agencies.

Representatives of civil rights groups and legal experts in law enforcement have pledged to work closely with the Biden administration, U.S. Congress, and public policymakers in quickly and effectively implementing the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to improve the country's policing and advance racial justice.

### **TOPIC 3 RACE RELATIONS AND RACISM (ANTI)**

#### **U.S. HOUSE PASSES PRESIDENT BIDEN’S CONTROVERSIAL PLAN TO REVAMP THE NATION’S POLICING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEMS**

With the urging of the Biden administration, the House of Representatives passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. This legislation is aimed at reducing police violence against people of color, while also improving policing for everyone by reforming law enforcement agencies nationwide.

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Among other things, this policing legislation aims to provide a foundation for a more transparent national database on policing and limitations on the measures police are allowed to use. Despite its intention, many experts are expressing concerns about the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and are critical of the Biden administration and Congress for moving so quickly on such a complicated piece of legislation.

Civil rights experts are concerned that the legislation does not go far enough to solve the fundamental problems in policing. Phillip Stinson, a criminal justice professor at Bowling Green State University and former police officer, pointed out that the problem of the current policing is not about “a few rotten apples” so only changing the standard won’t necessarily change legal outcomes. Experts argue that community programs and initiatives targeting the root causes of police misconduct, from education to housing, should be prioritized more, in addition to the changes introduced in the new legislation.

In addition to concerns about the scope of the new legislation, experts expressed worries about its effectiveness. Legal experts warned that most of the provisions make changes only at the federal level, while the federal government has very little control over policing by state and local governments. It is also unclear whether the legislation’s financial penalties would be enough to incentivize compliance as federal subsidies have never been the main source of funding for state and local governments:

according to the U.S. Census Bureau, state and local governments spent about \$120 billion, while the federal government contributed about \$5 billion towards policing in 2018.

Representatives of civil rights communities and legal experts have pledged to continue raising their concerns to the Biden administration, U.S. Congress, and public policymakers to ensure a just policing structure in ways they believe will establish more advanced racial justice.

**Appendix I. Effect of OIST on Diffuse, Specific, and Issue-Specific Trusts in the Political Entities Unrelated to the Treatment Articles**

Table I1: Effect of OIST on Diffuse, Specific, and Issue-Specific Trusts in the Supreme Court/Current Supreme Court Members When Reading Positive Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Supreme Court-Related Trust Variables			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Diffuse	Specific	Issue-Specific Diffuse	Issue-Specific Specific
(Intercept)	0.337 (0.232)	-0.042 (0.204)	0.404 (0.287)	0.215 (0.236)
Low OIST	0.081 (0.115)	0.173 (0.104)	0.156 (0.141)	0.159 (0.120)
No OIST	0.097 (0.115)	0.161 (0.104)	0.120 (0.142)	0.140 (0.120)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	0.049 (0.035)	0.086** (0.032)	0.070 (0.043)	0.057 (0.037)
Independents	-0.128 (0.149)	-0.145 (0.135)	-0.199 (0.184)	-0.181 (0.156)
Republicans	-0.089 (0.108)	0.046 (0.097)	-0.175 (0.133)	-0.152 (0.113)
Strong Partisanship	0.096 (0.114)	0.021 (0.103)	0.198 (0.140)	0.111 (0.119)
Trust in Supreme Court (Pre-Treatment)	0.848*** (0.028)	-	0.748*** (0.034)	-
Trust in Current Supreme Court Members (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.890*** (0.026)	-	0.818*** (0.030)
Observations	388	388	388	388
R <sup>2</sup>	0.724	0.770	0.581	0.681
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.719	0.765	0.573	0.675
Residual Std. Error (df = 380)	0.899	0.816	1.110	0.944
F Statistic (df = 7; 380)	142.463***	181.248***	75.162***	115.728***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

Table I2: Effect of OIST on Diffuse and Specific Trusts in the Overall National Election Process/2020 National Elections, and Overall Democratic System When Reading Positive Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Trust Variables		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Diffuse Election	Specific 2020 Election	Diffuse Democratic System
(Intercept)	1.053*** (0.252)	0.085 (0.248)	0.466 (0.255)
Low OIST	-0.025 (0.123)	-0.198 (0.113)	0.109 (0.124)
No OIST	0.032 (0.124)	0.007 (0.113)	0.090 (0.125)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	0.046 (0.038)	0.059 (0.035)	0.077* (0.038)
Independents	-0.717*** (0.164)	-0.099 (0.156)	-0.305 (0.163)
Republicans	-0.771*** (0.128)	0.026 (0.141)	-0.495*** (0.122)
Strong Partisanship	-0.071 (0.123)	-0.083 (0.113)	0.174 (0.124)
Trust in Election (Pre-Treatment)	0.821*** (0.028)	-	-
Trust in 2020 Election (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.934*** (0.027)	-
Trust in Overall Democratic System (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	0.827*** (0.031)
Observations	388	388	388
R <sup>2</sup>	0.782	0.854	0.712
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.778	0.851	0.707
Residual Std. Error (df = 380)	0.973	0.888	0.981
F Statistic (df = 7; 380)	195.281***	317.413***	134.339***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

Table 13: Effect of OIST on Diffuse, Specific, and Issue-Specific Trusts in the Supreme Court/Current Supreme Court Members When Reading Negative Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Supreme Court-Related Trust Variables			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Diffuse	Specific	Issue-Specific Diffuse	Issue-Specific Specific
(Intercept)	0.291 (0.187)	0.197 (0.186)	0.192 (0.261)	0.094 (0.203)
Low OIST	0.099 (0.096)	0.056 (0.096)	0.118 (0.134)	0.056 (0.105)
No OIST	0.161 (0.099)	0.150 (0.099)	0.001 (0.138)	0.134 (0.108)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	0.049 (0.029)	-0.010 (0.029)	0.047 (0.041)	0.026 (0.032)
Independents	-0.181 (0.130)	0.089 (0.130)	-0.057 (0.181)	0.090 (0.142)
Republicans	-0.150 (0.089)	-0.023 (0.089)	-0.033 (0.124)	0.075 (0.097)
Strong Partisanship	0.020 (0.098)	0.199* (0.098)	0.152 (0.137)	0.113 (0.107)
Trust in Supreme Court (Pre-Treatment)	0.860*** (0.023)	-	0.797*** (0.032)	-
Trust in Current Supreme Court Members (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.912*** (0.024)	-	0.857*** (0.026)
Observations	406	406	406	406
R <sup>2</sup>	0.782	0.790	0.612	0.736
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.778	0.786	0.605	0.731
Residual Std. Error (df = 398)	0.787	0.787	1.096	0.859
F Statistic (df = 7; 398)	203.570***	214.010***	89.587***	158.136***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

Table I4: Effect of OIST on Diffuse and Specific Trusts in the Overall National Election Process/2020 National Elections, and Overall Democratic System When Reading Negative Assessment of the Government

	Post-Treatment Trust Variables		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Diffuse Election	Specific 2020 Election	Diffuse Democratic System
(Intercept)	1.121*** (0.228)	0.420 (0.241)	0.736*** (0.187)
Low OIST	0.098 (0.113)	0.145 (0.108)	0.172 (0.095)
No OIST	0.009 (0.116)	0.021 (0.111)	-0.015 (0.098)
Partner Interest (Pre-Treatment)	0.023 (0.034)	0.028 (0.033)	0.010 (0.029)
Independents	-0.644*** (0.156)	-0.341* (0.154)	-0.345** (0.129)
Republicans	-0.504*** (0.114)	-0.128 (0.126)	-0.305*** (0.090)
Strong Partisanship	-0.079 (0.115)	-0.048 (0.110)	-0.030 (0.097)
Trust in Election (Pre-Treatment)	0.825*** (0.026)	-	-
Trust in 2020 Election (Pre-Treatment)	-	0.893*** (0.025)	-
Trust in Overall Democratic System (Pre-Treatment)	-	-	0.857*** (0.024)
Observations	406	406	406
R <sup>2</sup>	0.778	0.842	0.788
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.774	0.839	0.785
Residual Std. Error (df = 398)	0.921	0.884	0.775
F Statistic (df = 7; 398)	199.046***	302.136***	211.672***

**Note a:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Note b:** *Low OIST*, *No OIST*, *Independents*, *Republicans*, and *Strong Partisanship* are binary variables.

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