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Social Identity and Intergroup Communication

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Annotated Bibliography

Abeles, A. (2021). Highlighting Similarities between Political Parties Reduced Perceived Disagreement on Global Warming. *Political Communication*, 38(6), 751–772.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2021.1884629>

Lit Review/ Rationale: This article heavily focuses on how the media influences public perception of polarization levels. With a wide range of channels and an increase of noise, it is harder for consumers to disseminate information. In today’s world, individuals are able to consume media that reinforces their previous beliefs rather than exposing them to new information. Rather than highlighting areas of agreement between political ideologies, news outlets hyper fixate on the areas of disagreement. This leads Americans to assume that there is more conflict than there is consensus on policy issues. Previous literature shows that Americans rarely discuss global warming nor do they hear about it in the news. While most Americans agree that the Earth is warming, literature shows that most Americans perceive that Democrats and Republicans disagree on the legitimacy and impact of climate change.

H1: “Respondents exposed to a narrative highlighting agreement will perceive a smaller partisan gap than respondents exposed to a narrative highlighting disagreement”

H2: Respondents who are exposed to the agreement narrative, compared to the disagreement narrative, will perceive more Republicans to think global warming has been happening”

H3: Republican respondents exposed to the agreement narrative, compared to the disagreement narrative, might perceive more of their co-partisans think global warming has been happening, which in turn might make them more likely to express the belief that global warming has been happening”

Methods:

Online survey taken by 1,000 American adults using a non-probability sample was used to answer the above 3 hypotheses. The data was collected between the end of 2016 and the start of 2017, and it was nationally representative based on demographics. Respondents were asked to read a short hypothetical situation. One described Democrats and Republicans disagreeing on issues, while the other described the two groups agreeing. After reading their small paragraphs, participants were asked to make a guess on what group believes that the global temperature is rising. Additionally, respondents were asked their own personal opinion on whether or not the earth's temperature is rising.

Results/ Discussion: When it comes to demographics, the two groups of respondents (each assigned a different scenario to read) did not significantly differ from one another. This means that the random assignment was successful. H1 was supported, as participants perceived a smaller partisan gap when in the agreement group than while in the disagreement group. H2 was also supported, as respondents in the agreement group thought that more Republicans believe in global warming than those who were in the disagreement group. The separate groups did not have an impact on the perception of Democrats. H3, specifically about Republicans, revealed that there is a “significant positive indirect effect of the agreement narrative”. Republicans who were in the agreement group demonstrated a higher belief that fellow Republicans believe in climate change and global warming.

Application: This is a very applicable article when looking at morality shifting and determining how people view their various outgroups. The researchers note at the end that the default messaging that people are exposed to is similar to that of the disagreement group, which leads to greater public disconnect on issues surrounding climate change. I think that this is a really strong article for my infographic because it shows that people are more similar than we are made to believe. By focusing on common ground and similar end goals, polarization can be mitigated to find comprehensive policy solutions to universal problems.

Gibson, K. E., Lamm, A. J., Woosnam, K. M., & Croom, D. B. (2021). Engaging the Public in Water Policy: Do Political Affiliation and Ideology Matter? *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education*, 173(1), 13–28.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1936-704X.2021.3355.x>

Lit Review/ Rationale: Freshwater resources are dwindling in the United States, and environmental conservation has turned into a political topic. This study aims to reveal if political affiliation will serve as a predictor for how one will support certain water conservation policies. Previous research shows that a multitude of factors, including political climate, environmental knowledge, infrastructure, technology, habits, social norms, values, motivation, and self-efficacy all contribute to influence pro-environmental attitudes. Since the 1980s, environmental issues are no longer viewed as non-partisan issues; rather, pro-environmentalism is viewed as being harmful to the free market and economic growth, primarily by the Republican party. Historically, the Democratic Party has had more interest in conservation and environmental efforts, and have adopted agendas pushing for the support of sustainability and the environment.

Objective 1: “Describe respondents’ political affiliation, political ideology, and how they prepared to vote on a policy that impacts water; and

Objective 2: Determine if political affiliation and political ideology predicted how respondents prepared to vote on a policy that impacts water.

Methods: This study was a subsection of a larger one focused on determining public perceptions of water resources and climate change. For this study, three sections of the survey were looked at, which were respondents’ political affiliation, political ideology, and how respondents prepared to vote on water policy. Questions were asked through a Likert scale to determine attitudes. There were 5 questions used to determine how a participant prepares to vote on policy impacting water. Participants were recruited through Qualtrics through non-probability opt-in sampling. There were 1,049 total respondents, evenly split between male and female participants. 72.4% of the group was white, and more than half of the respondents had at least an associates degree.

Results/ Discussion: The majority of respondents fell within the traditional party lines of Republican, Democrat, and Independent. Additionally, the majority of respondents also indicated that they would consider both the positive and negative implications of policy stances before voting, as well as seeking factual information from multiple sources, try to fully understand the policy, ask others around them for their opinions, and have a conversation with others. This study found that very liberal leaning individuals and “other” political affiliations predicted how prepared one is when voting on water policy.

Application: This study mainly looked at how to frame and build educational tools to better inform the public on water quality issues. I think this is a perfect article for my infographic because I am trying to find ways to close the gap between polarized party affiliation when it

comes to environmental policy. This study shows that political affiliation DOES impact how prepared people are to vote on choices that impact water, and it is important to recognize those differences between political attitudes. Education is the best way to increase awareness and concern around water and environmental policy. In order to properly inform the public, messages must be catered towards certain political demographics. By altering messages and presenting information in unique ways for unique groups of people, there is hope that the general public will start to prioritize water usage and environmental protection measures.

Johnson, E. W., & Schwadel, P. (2019). Political Polarization and Long-Term Change in Public Support for Environmental Spending. *Social Forces*, 98(2), 915–941.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soy124>

Lit Review/ Rationale: Previous literature shows declines in support for environmental spending in the United States, specifically among self-identified Republicans. Additionally, there are external factors at play when it comes to public support for the environment, including political polarization amongst political elites and the rise of anti-climate change rhetoric. Currently, there is a gap in the research between individual opinions or external factors leading to the lack of public support amongst different political parties. The authors are looking to argue that politics do not exist in a vacuum, and that individual political affiliation depends on time period and cultural context. Previous research shows that support for environmental spending decreases during Democratic administrations and during poor economic times; support increases during Republican administrations and good economic times. Leaders who are apart of ones “out-group” face more scrutiny from opposing political parties, and the study ultimately draws

on “the way political affiliations along with political and economic contexts influences environmental opinion independently and in interaction with one another” (915).

H1: “differences in support for environmental spending between Republicans and other Americans increase across time periods”

H2a: Individual support for environmental spending is likely to be heightened during periods of Republican control of the presidency and dampened under period of Democratic control

H2b: Individual support for environmental spending is likely to be heightened during periods of Republican control of the Congress and dampened under periods of Democratic control

H3: Differences in support for environmental spending between Republicans and other Americans are particularly large during Democratic presidential administrations

H4: Differences in support for environmental spending between Republicans and other Americans are particularly large during adverse economic conditions

Method: Data from the General Social Survey from the years 1973-2014 was pulled to analyze if Americans’ views of spending money on the natural environment has altered. Cases with missing data were deleted, and the final sample size was 21,225 Americans. Since support for the environment is nuanced based on current events and historical context, the researchers decided to only look at single items of analyses rather than aggregated scales of support. GSS asks survey respondents to indicate either (1) “about the right amount of money” or (2) “too little” money is being spent on various issues the nation is facing, environmentalism being one of them. This question was primarily looked at for researchers to get a baseline understanding of how people viewed the government. Dummy variables were used to determine respondents' political affiliation based on the traditional 2 party system, with a category being “Republicans and all other Americans” and “Democrats and all other Americans”. Other factors are analyzed

throughout the research using the same GSS survey data, and a hierarchical age-period-cohort model is used to analyze differences in public opinion.

Results/ Discussion: As the data moves closer to 2012 and modern political times, the gap widens between Republicans and Democrats and their opinions on government spending for the environment. The researchers found that current events and period-based variation primarily contributes to fluctuations in public support for the environment. H1 was not supported, as public opinion surrounding federal environmental spending is more nuanced and is not as simple as a growing gap between political parties. H2 was supported, as the public in general is less supportive of environmental spending when there is a Democrat in office, regardless of personal party affiliation. H3 was supported, but H4 was not supported, meaning that the presidential administration greatly contributes to attitudes towards environmental spending but Congressional control does not.

Application: This feels like a good article to include as a baseline for how political polarization contributes to public attitudes of environmental spending. It goes in great depth explaining how historical and political contexts are important when discussing environmental policy, and I can use this as a baseline for my infographic. Since the researchers looked at so many varying levels of analyses, this would be great information to include in a “limitations” or “other factors” section of my infographic. The researchers explain that there are a lot of factors, age being one of them, that point to support levels for sustainability and government funds going to the environment.

Konisky, D. M., Milyo, J., & Richardson, L. E. (2008). Environmental Policy Attitudes: Issues, Geographical Scale, and Political Trust. *Social Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell)*, 89(5), 1066–1085. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2008.00574.x>

Lit Review/ Rationale: In recent history (up until 2008), the public believed that too little was being spent on the environment and not enough effort was made to respond to changes to the environment. Based on previous literature, while it can be argued that the public would like to see an increase in environmental spending and focus, it doesn't gather the whole picture. Specifically, what types of projects and management does the public feel needs higher attention? Similar to other articles, this literature review highlights the previous literature that generally shows that Democrats are more likely to support environmental spending than Republicans are. This article focuses on environmental policy attitudes and how that leads to different types of environmental action. There is a gap in the literature when it comes to whether public attitudes on the environment are consistent across multiple issues. Additionally, there is attention on how geographical location can impact opinions on environmental policy. Lastly, public trust is another gap but is used in this context to determine policy preferences on a wide range of issues.

Methods: This study was conducted by taking a survey sample from the larger 2007 CCES. More specifically, researchers asked respondents to think about how the government operates on 12 environmental issues. Respondents answered the 12 questions on a Likert-Scale range to indicate their attitudes towards certain choices and ideas.

Results/ Discussion: Overall, there was strong support for an increase of government action across all 12 issues presented. Protecting drinking water and rivers, lakes, and ecosystems were the two categories that received a lot of support from respondents. This study revealed that the public is particularly concerned with local and national pollution issues. These issues are closer

to home for respondents, so it is easier to garner support. When it comes to explaining public attitudes on the environment, the 12 questions were broken down into scales. These scales revealed that respondents are more likely to support government action addressing pollution rather than engaging in resource preservation issues. This could be due to the fact that participants are actively seeing the impacts and living with pollution, so it is fresher in their minds. It is determined that public trust in the government has a statistically significant positive effect on public attitudes on actions to address pollution, but the same trend is not present for resource preservation.

Application: This is an older article, but it serves as good background information that forms the basis of other articles I am planning on using. It is regularly quoted by environmental and political journals alike, and it really highlights how political trust impacts environmental policy. This article also shows that local thinking is more likely to have support over national or global. This is particularly relevant for my infographic because I am hoping to focus on local environmental issues, such as the Fox River and having safe and accessible drinking water, rather than focusing on greater national environmental issues. However, while this trend is identified, there is no strong answer as to why.

Mueller, J. T., Mowen, A. J., & Graefe, A. R. (2018). We Aren't So Different After All: Differences and Similarities Between Political Affiliation and Issues of Park Use, Management, and Privatization. *Leisure Sciences*, 40(7), 735–749.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2018.1534623>

Lit Review/ Rationale: “The purpose of this study was to explore the level of partisan polarization regarding issues of state park use, management, and privatization” (735). Animosity

between the two dominant political parties has risen in the last several decades due to the perception of increased political polarization amongst political elites. Building on previous literature, the authors are looking to study if political polarization is present in State Park management. They focus on park use, management, and privatization, in addition to the development of shale gas development in state parks.

R1: "Is there a difference between political affiliation and state park use?"

R2: "Is there a difference between political affiliation and support for specific state park management activities?"

Methods: This study used a stratified panel from Qualtrics to collect data. There were 1020 participants, evenly split between New York and Pennsylvania residents. The survey was distributed using a quota sampling method. Four questions were asked to participants, including questions on park and outdoor recreation participation, park management activities and objectives, and park privatization attitudes. All questions were asked on a Likert scale. Party affiliation was determined the same way it is through the American National Election Studies, and affiliations were re-coded into 1 of 3 categories for simplification.

Results/ Discussion: The results of this study showed that no, there is not a difference between political affiliation and state park use. There are also no significant differences between park visitation frequency and political affiliation. There are, however, some differences between party affiliation and attitudes towards supporting specific state park management activities. In general, support for the majority of state park management activities were not sorted along party lines, but there were still some differences present. When it comes to privatization, republicans were more supportive of every form of privatization than independents and democrats. Specifically,

Republicans and Democrats differ in support of corporate sponsorship of state parks and the outsourcing of state park services. Democrats were less supportive of both actions.

Application: This is a good article because it clearly shows a lack of polarization when it comes to state park use. It does however raise the question about issue saliency at the end. It is unknown if the trends discovered here are truly un-polarized or if members associated with a specific political party just don't know enough about the issue. It raises the point of climate change becoming a politically polarizing issue, and so far state park usage has not been lumped into the same environmentalism category. However, there is the possibility for state park use and land management to become a political platform in the future. It is important to keep in mind that environmental spaces are enjoyed by everyone, and political affiliation should not be taken into account when making policy decisions for the land.

Sanders, C. E., Gibson, K., & Lamm, A. J. (2022). Perceived Government Control and its Influence on Climate Change Knowledge and Perceptions: Applications for Effective Communication. *Journal of Applied Communication, 106*(3), add page range here.
<https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.2441>

Lit Review/ Rationale: Oftentimes individuals adopt the viewpoint of their ingroups when it comes to climate change conversations, and those conversations are seeping into current political discourse. As mass media becomes more accessible, it is now easier than ever for people to live in echo chambers and only take in the information that they wish to take in. The previous literature has identified that political affiliation and ideology are strong predictors for pro-environmental behavior and attitudes. In general, Republicans are against climate change dialogue and reject mitigation efforts. In contrast, Democrats believe in climate change and wish

to incorporate mitigation efforts into public policy. As presidential administrations turn over, there has been more and more distrust with governing agencies and a growing lack of trust with the political establishment as a whole. With gaps in climate change knowledge amongst the public, there is more apathy towards environmentalism attitudes. Social Judgement Theory is also drawn upon in this literature review. The theory is composed of three concepts, which are latitudes of acceptance, rejection, and non-commitment. Essentially, personal attitudes are used as a frame of reference for understanding new information rather than scientific facts and data.

Objective 1: “describe respondents’ perceptions of government autonomy/control on environmental behavior, perceptions of climate change, and knowledge of climate change

Objective 2: determine if political affiliation, political ideology, and perceptions of government autonomy/control on environmental behavior predicted perceptions of climate change

Objective 3: determine if political affiliation, political ideology, and perceptions of government autonomy/control on environmental behavior predicted knowledge of climate change.

Methods: Quantitative study that was a part of a larger research project focused on public perceptions of water issues. An online survey was developed to include demographic, multiple choice, true/false, and Likert-Scale. Data were collected using Qualtrics using non-probability opt-in sampling methods.

Results/ Discussion: Most respondents believe that they have autonomy related to engagement in environmental behavior, and a middle ground-type opinion when it comes to perceptions of government control on environmental behavior. With objective 2, multiple linear regression showed that political affiliation and political ideology predicted perceptions of climate change, which is in line with the previous literature. Additionally, political affiliation and ideology was a predictor for the level of climate change knowledge, with Democrats showing a higher level of

climate change knowledge compared to other political ideologies and affiliations. Policy is a key defense mechanism against climate change and environmental degradation, and public opinion heavily influences public policy. By having more educational materials on climate change that appeal to multiple audiences, climate change activists can break through echo chambers to stress the importance of how policy affects daily life.

Application: The research found in this article supports the findings of several other articles I am using for this project. By solidifying the idea that affiliation and ideology is a key predictor for climate change attitudes, the messages I create will have to showcase the nuance found within political ideology. Additionally, increasing public trust is another key aspect of this article that I want to highlight in my infographic. Public trust in science is essential to the climate change conversation so that the public can escape from their self-imposed echo chambers. Mass media is also an interesting component of this article and findings because social media and the increase in noise makes it harder for individuals to fact check and obtain accurate scientific information.

Pluralistic ignorance citation:

Shamir, J., & Shamir, M. (1997). Pluralistic Ignorance Across Issues and Over Time:

Information Cues and Biases. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 61(2), 227–260.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2749551>