

Online Appendix for “The Polarizing Effects of Online Partisan Criticism: Evidence from Two Experiments” (*Int’l Journal of Press/Politics*)

by Elizabeth Suhay, Emily Bello-Pardo, and Brianna Maurer

Appendix A: Study 1

Dependent Variable Wording

Feeling Thermometer

Please rate each group below using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the group. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don’t feel favorable toward the group or that you don’t care too much for that group. You would rate the group at the 50 degree mark if you don’t feel particularly warm or cold toward the group. You may choose any number between (and including) 0 and 100. Use the slider to indicate your rating. Your rating will be displayed toward the right of each category.

Democrats / Republicans

Approval Questions

Please respond to each statement below by indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Obama is handling the SEQUESTER?

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Obama is doing GENERALLY?

(Strongly disapprove, Disapprove, Slightly disapprove, Neither approve nor disapprove, Slightly approve, Approve, Strongly approve)

Treatments

Obama: government will manage sequester as well as it can

Reuters | Mar 04, 2013

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Barack Obama said on Monday that government agencies would need to make "very difficult decisions" as a result of sharp spending cuts that went into effect last week but warned that families would be hurt and economic growth would suffer.

Government agencies must cut their spending by \$85 billion as of Friday after the president and Congress failed to agree to an alternative deficit reduction plan. The effects of those cuts will be rolled out in coming weeks and months as government agencies put in place plans for operating with less money.

Obama said he would continue to try to get Republicans to compromise on a plan to roll back the cuts, taking place under a process known as sequestration. Republican leaders have said they will not negotiate so long as the president insists that increasing taxes be part of a resolution.

Republicans have long argued that the only way to tame budget deficits over time is by slowing the cost of social safety net programs. These include the Medicaid healthcare program for the poor, the Medicare government healthcare program for the elderly and disabled, and the Social Security retirement program, which are becoming more expensive as a large segment of the U.S. population hits retirement age.

(Reporting By Mark Felsenthal; Editing by Sandra Maler)

5 COMMENTS

Commenter 1 wrote:

Across the board cuts are the stupidest thing that legislators can do. It does not differentiate those areas that are "fat" from areas that are already close to the bone. In order to make intelligent cuts, real analysis needs to be done on what are the right amount of cuts and where they should be made.

Commenter 2 wrote:

Maybe the deficit should be paid for by Democrats. Of course most are on the "public dole"... Moochers elected a looter to steal from the producers.

Commenter 3 wrote:

There will be no grand bargain. The sequester cuts are here to stay. We are going to have to live with it. I don't see any further cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security happening either. Democrats will not support cuts to entitlement programs unless there is dollar to dollar revenue from tax reform. Since Republicans say no to any more tax increases there will not be any more cuts to entitlements.

Commenter 4 wrote:

Obama is the ultimate Democrat. They are experts in slime and sleaze and have created a base of diehard voters who will ALWAYS vote Democrat (because they can recite the alphabet up to "D" and recognize that letter on their ballots).

Commenter 5 replied:

Liberalism truly is a communicable disease.

5 COMMENTS

Commenter 1 wrote:

Across the board cuts are the stupidest thing that legislators can do. It does not differentiate those areas that are "fat" from areas that are already close to the bone. In order to make intelligent cuts, real analysis needs to be done on what are the right amount of cuts and where they should be made.

Commenter 2 wrote:

There is one way to put an end to the discomforts of the sequester, and that is for Republicans simply to work with Barack Obama. But to realize that point requires a functioning brain, and I am not aware of the existence of any in the Republican camp.

Commenter 3 wrote:

There will be no grand bargain. The sequester cuts are here to stay. We are going to have to live with it. I don't see any further cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security happening either. Democrats will not support cuts to entitlement programs unless there is dollar to dollar revenue from tax reform. Since Republicans say no to any more tax increases there will not be any more cuts to entitlements.

Commenter 4 wrote:

The only way for the GOP to support its arguments is to lie. Because even they are too ashamed to tell the truth out loud: They are greedy bastards who hate the poor and want them to suffer.

Commenter 5 replied:

Republicans do enjoy inflicting pain. They're a pack of sick motherf-ckers.

Appendix B: Study 2

Dependent Variable Wording

Feeling Thermometer

Please rate each group below using something we call a feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees indicate you feel favorable and warm towards the group. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you do not feel favorable toward that group or that you do not care much for that group. You would rate the group at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the group. You may choose any number between (and including) 0 and 100. Use the slider to indicate your rating.

Democrats / Republicans

Marriage Preference

How do you think you would react if a member of your family told you they were going to marry a Republican? Would you be...

How do you think you would react if a member of your family told you they were going to marry a Democrat? Would you be...

(Very unhappy, Unhappy, Somewhat unhappy, Neither happy nor unhappy, Somewhat happy, Happy, Very happy)

Likeminded Community

Imagine for a moment that you are moving to another community...In deciding where to live, how important would it be to live in a place where most people held political views similar to your own?

(Not important, Somewhat important, Moderately important, Very important)

Treatments



Middle class share of America's income shrinking

By: [Associated Press](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) — The share of the nation's income earned by the middle class has fallen to its lowest level in recent decades. It's been surpassed by affluent earners as median wages stagnate and wealth concentrates at the top.

A study by the Pew Research Center highlights the diminished share for the roughly half of U.S. adults who define themselves as "middle class." The report describes this group as suffering its "worst decade in modern history."

In all, 85 percent of middle-class Americans say it is more difficult now than a decade ago to maintain their standard of living.

Democratic and Republican lawmakers in Washington disagree over how to address the problem of the shrinking middle class.

Democrats tend to favor increasing taxes on wealthy Americans and devoting those resources to government programs that help middle and low income Americans, such as education, job training, and health care.

Republicans tend to favor a different approach, arguing that decreasing business regulations and decreasing taxes will spur economic growth, which will ultimately help all Americans financially.

Comments

[JoD33](#) 42 minutes ago

This article got it right!!

My parents were able to "live the American dream" but my family today can barely afford our mortgage + other necessities.

[pj@parker67](#) 2 hours ago

The GOPs ideas are solid.....BUT the **bullsh*t** Democratic plan will definitely just hurt the economy more

[Jordanta](#) 2 hours ago

Agree! **IDIOT Democrats** don't understand how to address the hardships average Americans face.

[SamNess](#) 3 hours ago

Its a shame to watch the middle class lifestyle slip away for so many hardworking people

Appendix C: Additional Tables

Table A1: Alternate Like-minded Community Models (Study 2)

	OLS estimation with PID interactions	Ordered probit estimation
Anti-Democrat Negativity	0.131 ^{***} (0.039)	0.436 ^{***} (0.131)
Anti-Republican Negativity	0.084 ^{**} (0.039)	0.287 ^{**} (0.132)
Party ID	0.073 [*] (0.044)	0.090 (0.064)
Anti-Dem Negativity * PID	-0.081 (0.053)	
Anti-Rep Negativity * PID	-0.044 (0.053)	
Constant	0.275 ^{***} (0.032)	
Observations	531	531
R-squared	0.025	
Adjusted R-squared	0.016	
Residual Std. Error	0.328 (df=525)	
F Statistic	2.739 ^{**} (df=5;525)	

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Party ID coded -1 to 1 with Republicans receiving higher scores. * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Table A2: Treatment Effects for Individual Feeling Thermometers (Study 1)

	Feeling Thermometer Republicans	Feeling Thermometer Democrats	Rep/Dem FT Comparison
Anti-Democrat Incivility	0.033 (0.025)	-0.029 (0.024)	0.063** (0.030)
Anti-Republican Incivility	0.021 (0.025)	-0.049** (0.024)	0.070** (0.030)
Party ID	0.239*** (0.025)	-0.311*** (0.024)	0.550*** (0.030)
Anti-Dem Incivility * Party ID	0.007 (0.038)	-0.048 (0.036)	0.050 (0.045)
Anti-Rep Incivility * Party ID	0.037 (0.037)	-0.062* (0.035)	0.102** (0.045)
Constant	0.350*** (0.017)	0.445*** (0.016)	-0.095*** (0.020)
Observations	415	418	415
R-squared	0.398	0.578	0.720
Adjusted R-squared	0.391	0.572	0.717
Residual Std. Error	0.187 (df=409)	0.177 (df=412)	0.223 (df=409)
F Statistic	54.187*** (df=5;409)	112.653*** (df=5;412)	210.275*** (df=5;409)

Note: Ordinary Least Squares regression. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Party ID coded -1 to 1 with Republicans receiving higher scores. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A3: Treatment Effects for Individual Feeling Thermometers (Study 2)

	Feeling Thermometer Republicans	Feeling Thermometer Democrats	Rep/Dem FT Comparison
Anti-Democrat Criticism	0.010 (0.027)	0.029 (0.026)	-0.013 (0.035)
Anti-Republican Criticism	-0.010 (0.027)	0.028 (0.027)	-0.033 (0.035)
Party ID	0.248*** (0.030)	-0.221*** (0.030)	0.470*** (0.040)
Anti-Dem Criticism * Party ID	-0.034 (0.036)	-0.030 (0.036)	-0.011 (0.048)
Anti-Rep Criticism * Party ID	0.026 (0.036)	-0.080** (0.036)	0.105** (0.048)
Constant	0.457*** (0.022)	0.447*** (0.022)	0.004 (0.029)
Observations	526	519	515
R-squared	0.415	0.457	0.638
Adjusted R-squared	0.410	0.452	0.634
Residual Std. Error	0.221 (df=520)	0.220 (df=513)	0.290 (df=509)
F Statistic	73.816*** (df=5;520)	86.431*** (df=5;513)	179.123*** (df=5;509)

Note: Ordinary Least Squares regression. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Party ID coded -1 to 1 with Republicans receiving higher scores. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A4: Treatment Effects Moderated by Partisan Identification – Dummy Variables (Study 1)

	Rep/Dem FT Comparison	Obama Disapproval
Anti-Democrat Incivility	0.043 (0.054)	-0.090* (0.054)
Anti-Republican Incivility	-0.002 (0.054)	-0.066 (0.054)
Democrats	0.296*** (0.053)	0.061 (0.053)
Lean Democrats	0.346*** (0.054)	0.093* (0.054)
Independents	0.586*** (0.057)	0.289*** (0.057)
Lean Republican	0.830*** (0.072)	0.516*** (0.072)
Republican	0.839*** (0.072)	0.338*** (0.072)
Strong Republican	1.212*** (0.085)	0.468*** (0.084)
Anti-Dem Incivility * Democrat	-0.048 (0.077)	0.106 (0.075)
Anti-Dem Incivility * Lean Democrat	-0.026 (0.081)	0.120 (0.080)
Anti-Dem Incivility * Independent	-0.001 (0.086)	0.156* (0.085)
Anti-Dem Incivility * Lean Republican	0.096 (0.108)	0.147 (0.107)
Anti-Dem Incivility * Republican	0.085 (0.108)	0.326*** (0.107)
Anti-Dem Incivility * Strong Republican	0.057 (0.125)	0.338*** (0.124)
Anti-Rep Incivility * Democrats	-0.017 (0.077)	0.098 (0.076)
Anti-Rep Incivility * Lean Democrats	-0.013 (0.084)	0.123 (0.083)
Anti-Rep Incivility * Independents	0.015 (0.085)	0.175** (0.084)
Anti-Rep Incivility * Lean Republicans	0.150 (0.104)	0.151 (0.103)
Anti-Rep Incivility * Republicans	0.160 (0.108)	0.152 (0.107)
Anti-Rep Incivility * Strong Republicans	0.207* (0.125)	0.339*** (0.124)
Constant	-0.677*** (0.036)	0.259*** (0.035)
Observations	415	418
R-squared	0.745	0.526
Adjusted R-squared	0.732	0.502
Residual Std. Error	0.217 (df=394)	0.216 (df=397)
F Statistic	57.578*** (df=0;394)	22.057*** (df=20;397)

Note: OLS regression. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table A5: Treatment Effects Moderated by Partisan Identification – Dummy Variables (Study 2)

	Rep/Dem FT Comparison	Marriage Preference	Likeminded Community
Anti-Democrat Criticism	-0.079 (0.081)	-0.106 (0.065)	0.119*** (0.039)
Anti-Republican Criticism	-0.165** (0.075)	-0.146** (0.061)	0.070* (0.039)
Democrats	0.111 (0.133)	0.140 (0.110)	-0.098* (0.050)
Lean Democrats	0.346* (0.176)	0.084 (0.146)	-0.029 (0.054)
Independents	0.484*** (0.086)	0.127* (0.071)	-0.082 (0.051)
Lean Republicans	0.701*** (0.099)	0.228*** (0.080)	-0.114** (0.053)
Republicans	0.684*** (0.102)	0.164** (0.082)	-0.129** (0.051)
Strong Republicans	0.957*** (0.085)	0.381*** (0.070)	0.078* (0.043)
Anti-Dem Criticism * Democrats	0.244 (0.151)	0.040 (0.125)	
Anti-Dem Criticism * Lean Democrats	-0.075 (0.191)	0.117 (0.158)	
Anti-Dem Criticism * Independents	0.207* (0.118)	0.201** (0.097)	
Anti-Dem Criticism * Lean Republicans	0.030 (0.129)	0.059 (0.104)	
Anti-Dem Criticism * Republicans	0.111 (0.126)	0.139 (0.102)	
Anti-Dem Criticism * Strong Republicans	0.030 (0.107)	0.050 (0.087)	
Anti-Rep Criticism * Democrats	0.205 (0.148)	0.077 (0.122)	
Anti-Rep Criticism * Lean Democrats	-0.051 (0.191)	0.101 (0.159)	
Anti-Rep Criticism * Independents	0.137 (0.113)	0.159* (0.094)	
Anti-Rep Criticism * Lean Republicans	0.212* (0.124)	0.114 (0.101)	
Anti-Rep Criticism * Republicans	0.304** (0.123)	0.205** (0.101)	
Anti-Rep Criticism * Strong Republicans	0.191* (0.105)	0.197** (0.085)	
Constant	-0.469*** (0.064)	-0.140*** (0.052)	0.323*** (0.042)
Observations	515	529	531
R-squared	0.661	0.339	0.069
Adjusted R-squared	0.648	0.313	0.055
Residual Std. Error	0.285 (df=494)	0.237 (df=508)	0.322 (df=522)
F Statistic	48.249*** (df=20;494)	13.003*** (df=20;508)	4.870*** (df=8;522)

Note: OLS regression. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01