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The logo for Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is a circular emblem with the letters "VCU" in a bold, sans-serif font. It is positioned at the top center of a yellow, shield-shaped banner that has a black border. The banner is set against a background of a city skyline at night, with a bridge in the foreground and buildings reflected in water.

VCU

*The Ramerican*

**POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW**

Vol. 1/ 2016

## Table of Contents

Letter from the Department of Political Science 3

### Articles:

Web of Lies: The Impact of Misinformation Found on Social Media 5  
Travis Brandon, VCU

This study examines misinformation found on social media and the potential impact this misinformation could have on users' political knowledge and tolerance. The research uses a survey experiment to explore whether social media users are more apt to perceive ideologically confirming incorrect information as true, while perceiving ideologically opposing correct information as false. The research then explores whether exposure to ideologically opposing incorrect information leads to decreased tolerance toward their political foes.

The Influence of Public Opinion in the Decisions of State Supreme Court Judges 35  
Grace Wald, VCU

The United States has yet to come to a consensus on the best way to select state Supreme Court judges in order to balance judicial independence and judicial accountability. One of the main criticisms of judicial elections is that they may influence judges to match their decisions with public opinion in order to attain and keep their positions on the bench. Using data from the State Supreme Court Data Project archive, this study compares the different judicial selection methods to determine if the decisions of elected state Supreme Court judges in criminal cases are more influenced by public opinion than the decisions of judges appointed by state governors and legislators.

What's Ours Isn't Yours: Measuring the Successes of the Radical Right Across Strong and Weak Welfare States 55  
Lindsay April, VCU

As Radical-Right parties continue to gain traction across Europe, much scholarly attention has been paid to the platforms such parties use to mobilize voters. This paper uses European Union states' GDP, level of immigration, and right-wing vote share in the European Parliament to investigate whether the amount of welfare spending in a state is a plausible explanatory factor for this phenomenon. This argument functions on the premise that native-born citizens of countries with very generous welfare programs would feel less inclined to share these services with foreign-born residents of the same country, citing concerns of immigrants' alleged exploitation of these systems.

Fear, Confidence & Corporal Punishment: An Analysis of Potential Factors Impacting Death Penalty Support Among Americans 75  
Danielle Austen, VCU

There are a host of concerns about the death penalty including irrevocable error, cruel and unusual punishment, and high costs; nevertheless, Americans' popular support for the death penalty remains high in comparison to the rest of the Western world. This study analyzed data from the General Social Survey to discern whether fear of crime, confidence in the judicial system, and support for corporal punishment were positive indicators for death penalty support.

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Maximizing Worker Productivity Through Transportation	101
Presented at VCU's 10 <sup>th</sup> Annual Political Science Student Research Conference by Featured Outside Scholar: Jeffrey Martindale, Towson University	

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact that inadequate public transportation and expensive private transportation services have on commuters that are spatially mismatched from their places of employment or other destinations, as well as examine the relationship between transportation services, such as public transit systems, mileage-based user fees, and private sector transportation service subsidies, and worker productivity and community prosperity.

Book Reviews:

<i>The Silent Sex: Gender, Deliberation and Institutions</i> Lejla Libic, VCU	126
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

<i>Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction</i> Julia Carney, VCU	128
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Call for Papers	131
-----------------	-----

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## Letter from the Department of Political Science

The Department of Political Science at Virginia Commonwealth University is proud to present the inaugural issue of its undergraduate political science research journal, *The Ramerican Political Science Review*. This journal presents some of the best undergraduate work produced by students at VCU, plus a notable piece of work that was conducted by an outside researcher (Towson University) and presented at VCU's annual Political Science Student Research Conference.

The research articles selected for publication in this issue address questions of normative and scholarly importance. In the wake of this summer's Brexit vote, the questions posed by Lindsay April's research on European far-right electoral victories resonate strongly. And considering the ever contentious relationship between majority rule and minority rights, the questions posed by Grace Wald's research on the public's influence on judicial rulings are pertinent to understanding the very real stakes of political institutional design.

They encompass questions across sub-fields and use a variety of theoretical approaches and political science methods. Using an experimental survey, Travis Brandon investigates the effects of social media memes on Americans' levels of political knowledge and political tolerance, while Danielle Austen uses over four decades of data from the General Social Survey to explore the correlative relationship between support for the death penalty, and individuals' levels of authoritarianism, confidence in government institutions, and fear of crime.

We hope that these articles not only help to provide better understanding of relevant questions concerning the state of our politics, domestically and abroad, but also that they help inspire new questions for our readers. For example, Jeff Martindale's research asks us to consider how the public sector can capitalize on recent privatized transportation innovations in order to combat currently inefficient public transportation options for spatially-mismatched workers in their communities.

Furthermore, we hope that the work of this issue's researchers will encourage other students to conduct their own political science research, and to submit it for consideration to *The Ramerican Political Science Review* next year, whether exploring American politics, international relations, comparative politics, public policy or political theory.

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While the journal is supported by the Department of Political Science and the contributions of our alumni, the final product is the work of a student editorial board that solicits and reviews manuscripts in a double-blind fashion. Over sixty submissions were received and reviewed by the editors. The researchers featured in this issue went through a “revise and resubmit” process, wherein they made content and style changes that were requested by the editorial staff. The articles were then edited once more by the editorial staff prior to publication. This final product is a testament to their immense efforts during the summer months. The Department of Political Science would, therefore, like to thank this year’s editorial staff:

- Julia Carney, Class of 2017
- Atom Foltz, Class of 2018
- Mariah Hines, Class of 2017
- Lejla Libic, Class of 2016

The Department of Political Science would also like to thank Dr. Alexandra Reckendorf for founding this publication, and for advising our student editorial board as they worked through the process of critiquing submissions and formatting this journal.

VCU Department of Political Science  
August 2016

## **Web of Lies: The Impact of Misinformation Found on Social Media**

Travis Brandon, *Virginia Commonwealth University*

The popularity of the Internet and various forms of social media has exploded over the past decade. Well-studied topics such as the spread of misinformation, political knowledge, and tolerance, have just begun to be researched, in social media interactions. A number of scholars have argued that users of social media rarely have online interactions with those holding opposite ideological viewpoints (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith 2013; Jacobsen, Myung, & Johnson, 2015). Several others have explored the possible consequences of this absence of cross-ideological interaction as well (Stroud, 2010; Prior, 2013; Levendusky, 2013; Tewksbury & Riles, 2015). Other researchers have found evidence that misinformation is easily spread on the web, and that despite an increase in the quantity of public information sources, no change in the level of political knowledge has been observed amongst the general populace (Prior, 2005; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Hochschild & Einstein, 2015; Rojecki & Meraz, 2016). In contrast to these claims, some studies have made claims that online media increases the likelihood of cross-ideological interactions, and have shown an ambiguous or even positive effect on political knowledge (Messing & Westwood, 2012; Hollander, 2014; Dimitrova, Shehata, & Stromback, 2014; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2006). Still, the rampant spread of misinformation through social media sites suggests that these sites are unlikely to be channels of political knowledge and social tolerance. Although research regarding the relationship between the spread of misinformation and the use of online media is relatively new, the majority of research has shown that people are more likely to accept false information if it adheres to their

ideology and more likely to reject true information if it opposes their ideology.

Race, gender, religious affiliation, education, and socioeconomic status are some of the many factors that influence political knowledge and tolerance (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Typically, those in poverty or with low income levels show the lowest levels of political knowledge as they often have less education as well as reduced access to mediums that could potentially increase knowledge (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). However, political knowledge, specifically knowledge related to civil liberties in a liberal democracy, has been shown to be the most significant factor in explaining tolerance (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). The way individuals interpret information and form opinions, values, and attitudes, are significantly influenced by cultural norms, personal experiences, and other social factors (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Currently, research looking specifically at tolerance, misinformation, knowledge, and social media, has yet to be conducted.

There are several studies on misinformation, knowledge, and the Internet which were pertinent to the research question. The first school of thought relates to misinformation and knowledge and made an important distinction between the two. Prior (2005) argued that as people gain greater media choice, they subsequently gain political knowledge. Media in this sense was defined as access to cable or satellite television or the Internet (Prior, 2005). A major caveat to Prior's claim was that people choose among numerous options when watching television or surfing the web. People typically choose between either entertainment or news (Prior, 2005). Prior (2005) conducted surveys in which people were asked to rank different genres of media by favorability. The results showed that



over time, those who preferred entertainment and gained access to greater media choice, consumed less news and lost political knowledge (Prior, 2005). Similarly, results showed that over time, those who preferred news and gained access to greater media choice, consumed more news and improved their political knowledge (Prior, 2005). Knowledge is important, because when people believe incorrect information, it can be surprisingly hard to dissuade them (Hochschild & Einstein, 2015; Nyhan & Reifler, 2010).

In addition, the aforementioned research expounds upon the relationship between willingness to believe misinformation and a person's political ideology. Hochschild and Einstein (2015) pointed out numerous examples of falsities that continue to be believed by significant portions of the population; such examples include claims that Barack Obama was not born in the United States, that vaccines cause autism, and that the U.S. found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Most pertinent to the research question were the ideological differences found in those questioning the authenticity of Obama's birth certificate. Among Republicans, greater proportions of people self-identifying as strongly Republican believed Obama was born outside the U.S.; people who self-identified as weak Republican were less likely to believe this claim (Hochschild & Einstein, 2015). Even though the vast majority of Democrats disagreed with this statement, self-identifying weak Democrats were more likely to believe it than strong Democrats (Hochschild & Einstein, 2015).

It is imperative to establish a definition of the word misperception (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Misperceptions are beliefs that refute widely established opinions that have been backed by numerous experts and substantial evidence (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Nyhan and Reifler (2010)

argued that there is an essential ideological aspect to misperceptions; people will be more likely to believe false information if it confirms their viewpoints. An additional component of this ideological aspect is the term “backfire effect”, which Nyhan and Reifler (2010) defined as a phenomenon wherein “individuals who receive unwelcome information may not simply resist challenges to their views. Instead they may come to support their original opinion even more strongly” (p. 307). Nyhan and Reifler (2010) conducted experiments in which conservatives continued to believe false statements, even when shown correct factual information. The stronger conservatives were more likely to believe the false information after being shown the correction, supporting the idea of the backfire effect (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). Adding to this research, Rojecki and Meraz (2016) investigated two cases in which misperceptions that originated on the Internet, spread quickly and were even reported on by cable television news.

The second area of study that related to the research question could be termed the partisan proliferation school. A major component of this school is selective exposure, covered in detail by Stroud. While selective exposure was not part of the research question that was proposed, it was pertinent nonetheless; partisan selective exposure occurs when people with firm ideological views choose media that agrees with their views (Stroud, 2010). Stroud (2010) argued that increased media choice via the Internet would lead to increased polarization. In a study, Stroud (2010) found that across all forms of media, including newspaper, television, radio, and the Internet, selective exposure was a prevalent phenomenon. Himelboim et al. (2013) built on the research conducted by Stroud and found that selective exposure was taking place on Twitter. The

researchers identified clusters, or groups of tightly connected users, that formed the Twitter equivalent of a social network (Himmelboim et al., 2013). Using keywords related to relevant political controversies, the clusters were found to be ideologically homogeneous (Himmelboim et al., 2013). Jacobsen et.al. (2015) found selective exposure on the social media site Facebook as well. Jacobsen et al. (2015) examined links posted on the walls of ideologically opposite shows, such as the O'Reilly Factor and the Rachel Maddow Show, and discovered that conservatives overwhelmingly post links to conservative sites, with similarly homogeneous behavior for liberals via the Maddow Facebook Wall. Furthermore, even when posted links led to ideologically opposite sites, the purpose was often meant to show sarcasm, incredulity, or humor (Jacobsen et al., 2015).

The consequences of selective exposure via the Internet and social media could be profound. Levendusky (2013) showed that selective exposure could indeed lead to increased polarization. In an experiment, conservatives were shown clips from the conservative news channel, Fox News, while liberals were shown video clips from MSNBC and The Rachel Maddow Show (Levendusky, 2013). The results showed decreased levels of bipartisanship, and lowered levels of cross-ideological trust in both liberals and conservative groups after watching the ideologically similar clips (Levedusky, 2013). Likewise, Prior (2013) stated that people who hold strong ideological views are becoming increasingly extreme and that the cause of this is the proliferation of slanted media sources that cater to the extremes. Prior (2013) argued that these polarized extremes, or elites, are more likely to vote and to spread polarization into politics via elections.

The final school of thought relating to the research question presents the view that the Internet and, by extension, social media may

actually increase political knowledge and provide more opportunities for cross-ideological interactions. This view is often called the school of potential positives. Hollander (2014) found that people who often consume news on the Internet have increased levels of recall knowledge. This is significant because recall knowledge, as opposed to recognition knowledge, requires a more thorough understanding of the information at hand (Hollander, 2014). Messing and Westwood (2014) argued against the research that claims the Internet increases selective exposure. Highlighting social media in particular, the researchers explained that social endorsements, as opposed to ideology, are more important when users are choosing news sources (Messing & Westwood, 2014). Messing and Westwood (2014) pointed out that social media users are exposed to a wide variety of news sources, from different ideological perspectives. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) agreed and argued that Internet users are exposed to ideologically heterogeneous content.

All three schools of thought had a number of strengths and weaknesses. One weakness that affected nearly all schools to some extent was that very few studies looked specifically at social media. To counter this, studies that pertained to the Internet and other closely related forms of media were chosen. The misinformation and knowledge school, along with the partisan proliferation school; while different, are closely related. Stroud (2010) explains this perfectly,

Those with higher levels of political knowledge are better able to detect partisan cues that could lead them to select politically likeminded media and to develop polarized attitudes. Those with higher levels of political knowledge also may be better able to counterargue the information, thus yielding polarization even in

the face of contradictory information. Furthermore, the more information respondents have in favor of their opinion, the more certain they may feel about their opinion. Those with stronger partisan attachments are more motivated to select politically likeminded media, to process information in ways that support their existing partisan predispositions, and to hold their attitudes with certainty (p. 562).

While this assertion may be incorrect, it was the inspiration for the research question that was proposed.

Additionally, very little research was found supporting the third school of thought. While the argument by Westwood and Messing (2014) was compelling, Himelboim et al. (2013); and Jacobsen et al. (2015); showed that users, despite being exposed to cross-ideological content, politically interacted with others in a homogeneous network. It was this research, along with the other research contained within the first two schools, that most closely pertained to the research question, and which could be considered most adept at answering it.

### **The Political Ideology Factor**

Prior research has established that people often reject ideologically opposite information even when it is true and often accept ideologically affirming information even when it is false, which can inhibit the growth of political knowledge and propagate misconceptions. Research has also shown that politically minded users of the Internet rarely interact with others who hold opposing political views and that the politically invested seek out information on the web that is geared toward their ideology. This phenomenon, known as selective exposure, has been shown to decrease levels of tolerance toward opposite ideologies. Finally, misinformation is

commonly circulated on the web and social media, and research has shown that the majority of the web accessing public has seen a minimal increase, at best, in political knowledge resulting from the Internet. Thus, in a social media context, conservatives and liberals would be expected to more readily accept ideologically confirming false information as accurate, and both liberals and conservatives would be expected to more easily reject ideologically opposing true information as inaccurate. When exposed to ideologically opposing false misinformation in a social media context, it would be expected that liberals and conservatives would readily identify the information as such. What remained to be examined was whether there were differences in the levels of tolerance between liberals and conservatives when they were exposed to ideologically opposite false information, and how knowledge levels related to misinformation; if there was a relationship at all.

### **How to Solve the Social Media and Misinformation Dilemma**

Ideological bias plays an important role in the spread of political misinformation on social media, and has a negative impact on political knowledge. To test the hypotheses and determine the impact that the independent variable, misinformation found on social media, had on the dependent variables, knowledge and tolerance, the researcher utilized a survey experiment. The goal of the survey experiment was to collect meaningful data that would test the hypotheses, and that would show the differences, if there were any, in levels of tolerance between the political ideologies when exposed to ideologically opposite misinformation. The survey experiment was also utilized with the hope that it would provide data that could help determine if there were ideological differences in knowledge and recognition of misinformation. In conceptualizing the

independent variable, social media was defined as cell phone apps or web pages where users interact with each other to communicate and exchange information, ideas, thoughts, and interests; as well as share news, pictures, and videos. Examples include websites and smartphone apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Reddit, and Instagram. To complete the conceptualization of the independent variable, misinformation found on social media was defined as factually incorrect information that pertained to American politics; that could be posted and shared on social media sites. To operationalize the independent variable, political memes found on the Internet that contained factually incorrect or correct information were utilized. Internet memes are a form of media, often presented in the form of an image that may contain words, catchphrases, and other information that can be shared and circulated across the web via various platforms. Memes are commonly found and shared on social media sites and represented the best way to conceptualize the independent variable given the limitations of this study.

### **How to Define and Assess Knowledge**

In conceptualizing the first dependent variable, knowledge was defined as the ability to identify information that pertained to American politics as factual or incorrect, as well as the ability to correctly answer questions that pertained to American politics. To operationalize this dependent variable, survey respondents were asked a knowledge question that closely related to the information found in the memes.

The first knowledge question for conservatives corresponded with the ideologically reinforcing meme containing false information (Figure 1). Respondents were asked: “Which of the following statements is true?” with the following answer choices: since taking office, the job market for

Black Americans has improved under Barack Obama; since taking office, the job market for Black Americans has gotten worse under Barack Obama; since taking office, the job market for Black Americans hasn't changed under Barack Obama. The second knowledge question for conservatives corresponded with the ideologically opposing meme containing accurate information (Figure 2). The question was phrased: "Roughly 40% of Americans who receive food stamps..." with the answer choices being: White; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Asian. To help measure the first dependent variable, the answer choices were coded dichotomously, where 1=correct response and 0=incorrect response. So for the first question, 1=since taking office, the job market for Black Americans has improved under Barack Obama; for the second question 1=White.

The first knowledge question for liberals corresponded with the ideologically reinforcing meme containing false information (Figure 3). Respondents were asked "On which of the following does the U.S. federal government currently spend the least?" with the answer choices being: national defense; social security; foreign aid; welfare programs. The second knowledge question for liberals corresponded with the ideologically opposing meme containing inaccurate information (Figure 4). Respondents were asked, "Which of the following statements is true?" with the answer choices being: in 2011, more Americans were killed by clubs or hammers than rifles of any kind; in 2011, more Americans were killed by rifles of any kind than clubs or hammers; no data was collected to determine whether more Americans were killed by clubs or hammers, or rifles of any kind, in 2011. To help measure the first dependent variable, the answer choices were coded so they could be arranged dichotomously, where 1=correct



response and 0=incorrect response. For the first question 1=foreign aid; for the second question 1=in 2011, more Americans were killed by clubs or hammers than rifles of any kind.

### **Accuracy: Testing the Hypotheses**

In conceptualizing the second dependent variable, accuracy was defined as correctly identifying information in a meme as accurate or inaccurate. To operationalize this second dependent variable, respondents were asked to assess the accuracy of the information provided in the different memes.

For the validity questions, respondents rated the accuracy of the information in the memes by being asked: "Look at the image above. Is the information in the image..." and then were asked to rate the information as one of the following: definitely accurate; probably accurate; probably inaccurate; definitely inaccurate. To measure the second dependent variable, the answer choices were coded and arranged on an ordinal scale where: 4=definitely accurate, 3=probably accurate, 2=probably inaccurate, and 1=definitely inaccurate.

### **Tolerance: Defining the Final Dependent Variable**

In conceptualizing the third dependent variable, tolerance was defined as neutral or positive feelings toward the opposite ideology. To operationalize this final dependent variable, survey respondents were asked about their feelings toward the opposite ideology. Further operationalization of this dependent variable was defined as respondents who have neutral or positive feelings toward the ideology that is opposite to their own.

To operationalize tolerance, respondents in each group viewed an ideologically opposing meme containing false information and were asked:

“How much, if at all, do you like or dislike liberals/conservatives?” and were then given the following options: like a great deal; like a moderate amount; like a little; neither like nor dislike; dislike a little; dislike a moderate amount; dislike a great deal. To measure the third dependent variable, the answer choices were coded and arranged on an ordinal scale where: 7=dislike a great deal, 6=dislike a moderate amount, 5=dislike a little, 4=neither like nor dislike, 3=like a little, 2=like a moderate amount, and 1=like a great deal.

### **Ideology: A Wide Range of Choices & Addressing the Moderate Problem**

The ideologies that were utilized in this study were conservatives and liberals, defined in the context of American politics. These ideological labels were chosen, as opposed to major political party labels, because the number of Americans who describe themselves as independent from the major political parties continues to grow, and because large proportions of young people identify as politically independent.

Because ideology is an important component in how it relates to the independent variable, the first question on the survey asked all respondents to identify their political views. Respondents were offered the options: extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, neither liberal nor conservative, slightly conservative, conservative, or extremely conservative. This was done to provide respondents with a number of options with which they could identify their political ideology, and that aided in determining whether there were differences between the slight, moderate, and extreme respondents.

For the purposes of this study and to keep them from being excluded, the respondents who chose the option of neither liberal nor conservative were directed to a separate page where they were asked: “If

you had to choose, would you say you lean more liberal, or would you say you lean more conservative?” After the middle of the road respondents chose either conservative or liberal, they completed the remainder of the survey in the same fashion as the other liberals and conservatives.

### **Survey Experiment: Gathering Data Without Using Social Media**

Conservative respondents first received a meme geared toward their ideology, but that contained false information (Figure 1). The meme contains a picture of an African American man wearing a t-shirt that states ‘I need a job’ with the U.S. Capitol in the background and contains information that makes inaccurate claims about Black unemployment under Barack Obama and Ronald Reagan. The conservative respondents were then asked a validity question and a knowledge question to address the corresponding dependent variables. The conservative group then viewed a liberal meme containing true information (Figure 2). The meme contains a picture of a child that looks “poor” and the information claims that the vast majority of the poorest counties in the U.S. are located in predominantly conservative states, which is true. That was followed by separate validity and knowledge questions, which rounded out the operationalization of the corresponding dependent variables for the conservative group. Thus, these two memes and the corresponding validity questions assisted in testing the first hypothesis: whether conservatives would identify the ideologically confirming false meme as more accurate when compared with the ideologically opposing meme that contained true information; it also helped show whether knowledge levels for conservatives differed between the memes.



**Figure 1** Meme showing unemployment rates under Barack Obama and Ronald Reagan.

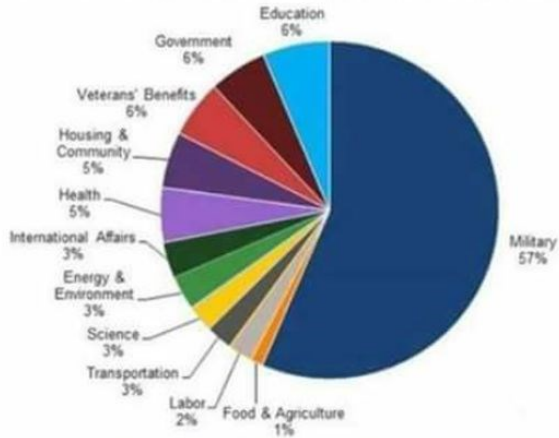


**Figure 2** Meme criticizing Republican economic policies while stating that most of America's poorest counties are in red states.

The final page for the conservatives contained a false liberal meme, which was a pie chart that showed the federal budget (Figure 3). The pie chart is false because the military expenditure as a proportion of the federal budget is much larger than it actually is. The meme also contains negative language toward Republicans and criticizes the party for

promoting cuts to welfare programs. The conservative group then answered another accuracy question, helping to further address the second dependent variable and testing the second hypothesis: which was whether the two groups would more easily identify the false ideologically opposing information, in comparison to the ideologically confirming false information. The liberal respondents went through the same process as the conservatives, just with ideologically opposite memes. They first received the ideologically confirming false meme, the aforementioned federal budget pie chart (Figure 3), and then answered a follow-up accuracy question and a traditional knowledge question that pertained to the information in the meme, the federal budget. On the same page, the liberals viewed the ideologically opposing true meme and answered another accuracy question and a traditional knowledge question that pertained to the information in the meme (Figure 4). The final page for the liberal respondents was constructed in the same manner as it was for the conservatives, showing an ideologically opposing false meme (Figure 1) and containing a follow-up accuracy and tolerance question. With both groups combined, both hypotheses were able to be tested, and all dependent variables examined.

Look closely at this chart of federal spending.



Somewhere within the tiny orange sliver at the bottom is the food stamp program that Republicans blame for our budget deficit.

And so ends today's lesson in Republican logic.

**Figure 3** Meme containing a pie chart of the federal budget that criticizes the republican party.



**Figure 4** Meme with information on various murder weapons in 2011.

### Survey Overview

To compensate for time constraints, the survey link was posted on some of the researcher's personal social media accounts in order to gather

the most respondents in the shortest timeframe. This represented one potential weakness of the study, as demographic questions showed that respondents were not representative of any larger population in race, religion, sex, or age. As such, the results of the study were not generalizable. A total of 129 respondents took part in the survey, 7 identified as extremely liberal, 37 as liberal, 14 as slightly liberal, 36 as moderate, 13 as slightly conservative, 21 as conservative, and 1 as extremely conservative. Of the moderate group, 21 went on to identify as liberal and 15 as conservative. Of the 129 who began the survey, approximately 112 completed the survey in its entirety; of the 112, approximately 44 were conservative, and 69 were liberal. Survey responses were collected from April 18, 2016, through April 26, 2016. Another potential weakness in posting the survey link to the researcher's personal social media accounts is the possibility, albeit unlikely, that respondents may have answered differently because they were aware of who made the survey. The survey questions were worded in such a way as to provide a valid translation of the variables. Further, questions were designed in such a way as to make them as clear and unbiased as possible for the respondents. However, the possibility remains that some respondents may have been confused or seen bias in the way the questions were worded. Because the survey was online, there was no potential for bias from survey administration. Survey respondents volunteered to take the survey, which represents an inherent weakness in itself. Finally, the memes were chosen on the basis of having wide appeal to one ideological group or the other, and because they contained either true or false information. However, there exists the possibility that some respondents may have disagreed with or held negative views toward the meme that

confirmed their ideology. Conversely, there exists the possibility that some respondents may have agreed with or held positive views toward the ideologically opposing memes. While dealing with many constraints, every possible effort was made to account for potential bias and weaknesses; however, the researcher acknowledges that other weaknesses or bias may exist.

To summarize, both the liberal and conservative respondents received an ideologically confirming false meme, an ideologically opposing true meme, and an ideologically opposing false meme. The data that was gathered from the survey allowed the researcher to examine possible differences in how the respondents reacted to the different memes, by way of the dependent variables; the accuracy, knowledge, and tolerance questions. No control group was necessary because the study was not seeking to examine differences between those who view memes and those who do not, instead, this study sought to evaluate whether the two political ideologies bought into false information found on social media, whether they rejected true information that opposed their views, and whether there were differences between the two groups.

### **Analysis: Political Ideology Plays an Important Role in Determining Accuracy**

To test the first hypothesis, that conservatives and liberals would rate ideologically confirming memes containing false information as more accurate than ideologically opposing memes containing true information; a survey experiment was used to collect relevant data for both groups. In order to test the first hypothesis, the two ideological groups were coded numerically in order to conduct quantitative analyses, with 0=liberals and 1=conservatives. The responses from the first two accuracy questions, one



after an ideologically confirming false meme and one after an ideologically opposing true meme, were also coded numerically and arranged on an ordinal scale in order to be used in statistical analyses, where: definitely accurate=4, probably accurate=3, probably inaccurate=2, definitely inaccurate=1. To determine whether each group rated its own false information as more accurate, a one-way ANOVA test was used, one for the liberal group, the results of which can be viewed in Table 1; and one for the conservative group, the results of which can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 1**

ANOVA					
Liberal Accuracy					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.616	1	2.616	6.396	.013*
Within Groups	55.623	136	.409		
Total	58.239	137			

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

For the liberal group ( $n=69$ ), the information in the false confirming meme was rated as more accurate ( $M= 2.68$ ) than the information in the ideologically opposing true meme ( $M= 2.41$ ). The first hypothesis was accepted for the liberals, as the group was significantly more likely to rate the ideologically confirming false meme as accurate than the ideologically opposing meme containing true information.

**Table 2**

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Conservative Accuracy					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.284	1	3.284	8.484	.005*
Within Groups	33.432	86	.389		
Total	36.716	87			

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

For the conservative group ( $N=44$ ), the ideologically confirming false meme was rated as more accurate ( $M= 2.50$ ) than the ideologically opposing true meme ( $M= 2.11$ ). The hypothesis was also accepted for the conservatives, as the group was significantly more likely to rate the ideologically confirming false information as accurate than the ideologically opposing meme containing true information. One-way ANOVA tests were then used to test the second hypothesis, that both ideological groups would rate the opposing false information as more inaccurate than the confirming false information; the conservative results can be seen in Table 3; liberal results can be seen in Table 4. Only respondents who answered both the accuracy question following the confirming false meme and the accuracy question following the opposing false meme were included in the analyses. The liberal group ( $n=66$ ) rated the opposing false meme as more inaccurate ( $M=2.03$ ) than the confirming false meme ( $M=2.68$ ) while the conservative group too ( $n=43$ ) rated the opposing false meme as more inaccurate ( $M= 2.12$ ) than the confirming false meme ( $M= 2.49$ ).

**Table 3**

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Conservative Accuracy 2					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.977	1	2.977	6.385	.013*
Within Groups	39.163	84	.466		
Total	42.140	85			

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

**Table 4**

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Liberal Accuracy 2					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	14.667	1	14.667	44.031	.000**
Within Groups	43.303	130	.333		
Total	57.9	1			

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

**Table 5**

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>					
Conservative Knowledge					
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.729 <sup>a</sup>	1	.017*		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	4.641	1	.031*		
Likelihood Ratio	5.865	1	.015*		
Fisher's Exact Test				.030	.015
Linear-by- Linear Association	5.664	1	.017*		
N of Valid Cases	88				
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.00.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

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

**Table 6**

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>					
Liberal Knowledge					
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.763 <sup>a</sup>	1	.002**		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	8.648	1	.003**		
Likelihood Ratio	9.967	1	.002**		
Fisher's Exact Test				.003	.002
Linear-by- Linear Association	9.692	1	.002**		
N of Valid Cases	138				
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 21.50.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

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

Thus, the second hypothesis was accepted for both the liberals and the conservatives. Additional one-way ANOVA tests were used to observe whether there were any significant differences between the two ideological groups for the reinforcing meme and the opposing meme;

however, no significant differences were found. While no hypothesis was made regarding knowledge, Chi-Square tests were used to examine any relevant observations; for conservative knowledge results see Table 5 above; for liberal knowledge results see Table 6.

Answer choices were coded dichotomously so they could be used in quantitative analyses, where: 1=correct and 0=incorrect. Surprisingly, for the conservative group (n=44) a significant positive association was found between the ideologically opposing meme containing true information and level of knowledge. Equally surprising, the liberal group (n=69) too saw a significant positive association between the ideologically opposing true meme and level of knowledge. Thus, despite both groups rating the ideologically opposing true memes as significantly less accurate than the ideologically confirming false memes, both groups demonstrated significantly increased knowledge levels for the knowledge question that corresponded with the information in the opposing true meme.

One-way ANOVA analyses were used to look for any significant differences between the ideological groups for both the confirming meme knowledge question and the opposing meme knowledge question; no significant differences were observed. For the final dependent variable, the answer choices for the tolerance question were coded numerically and arranged on an ordinal scale in order to be used in statistical analysis. A one-way ANOVA was used to look for differences between the ideological groups and to assess the level of tolerance. No significant difference between the conservative (n=43) tolerance rating ( $M= 4.42$ ) and the liberal (n=68) tolerance rating ( $M= 4.40$ ) was observed.

## **Discussion and Possible Implications**

As the data analysis showed, ideology played a significant role in determining the accuracy rating of the memes. Conservatives and liberals believed that the incorrect information that catered to their views was more accurate than the correct information opposing their views. This may represent an extension of the research conducted by Nyhan & Reifler (2010) as respondents were significantly more skeptical of the memes containing ideologically opposing information. If the majority of social media users' interactions are with other ideologically similar users, there is a high chance that they could regularly be exposed to incorrect and ideologically reinforcing stimuli. Thus, social media could facilitate a decrease in political knowledge.

The results are not generalizable, and all implications should be thought of as mere possibility; no claims made regarding this study should be assumed to be applicable to any larger population. Additionally, while memes are found across many social networking sites, social media itself was not the platform used to conduct the experiment. Despite this, the results certainly were compelling. Perhaps most interesting was that despite rating the ideologically opposing memes as less accurate, both groups answered the corresponding knowledge questions correctly at significantly higher rates than with the knowledge questions corresponding with the ideologically confirming memes that both groups deemed more accurate. It may be that respondents simply knew more about the topics or that they guessed or used an online search engine to answer the question. Alternatively, respondents may have been more influenced by their ideology when viewing the confirming meme, which could then be expressed by choosing the answer that fit their ideological beliefs. Perhaps

when facing ideologically opposing information on which they have no firm beliefs, the groups were more willing to go with the answer choice that the meme information pointed to. Thus, misinformation that confirms an individual's biases could potentially cause them to more firmly believe the inaccurate information, and while an individual may view ideologically opposing information as more incorrect, an individual holding no strong views in support of the information may be more willing to accept it as accurate.

To expound on this point, a hypothetical conservative ideologue is likely to be disapproving of Barack Obama's economic policies; when shown a meme which confirms this belief, the ideologue is essentially expressing their opinion or strongly held belief by choosing to rate the meme as accurate. The hypothetical conservative ideologue then answers the knowledge question with the same strongly held belief in mind, that Obama has not improved economic conditions for Black Americans, and subsequently answers the question incorrectly. The same hypothetical conservative ideologue may believe that most poverty in America occurs in cities; however, they likely hold no strong feelings on the subject. When shown a meme which claims that the vast majority of the poorest U.S. counties are located in 'Red States', the hypothetical conservative believes the information is inaccurate but because they hold no strong feelings on the subject; they opt to answer the knowledge question based on the information in the meme, despite that information standing oppositional to their views. While a hypothetical conservative was used in the previous examples, liberals scored significantly higher on the knowledge question that followed the ideologically opposing meme and thus are equally as likely as the conservatives to have answered both the accuracy and



knowledge questions in a similar manner, biased by their beliefs. Additionally, this explanation for why both groups scored significantly higher on the knowledge questions that followed the ideologically opposite memes, despite rating the memes as more inaccurate, could be incorrect. It is also possible that some memes may have provoked an emotional response in some respondents, perhaps influencing their answers. This is an area that deserves more research because if social media users are indeed rarely being exposed to ideologically opposite information, this could have a negative impact on political knowledge; however, if the echo chamber is false, then perhaps social media could facilitate more individuals to question their beliefs.

The tolerance results showed that roughly 50% of both groups expressed neither affection nor dislike for the opposite ideology. The tolerance results were relatively unsurprising given that only 7% of respondents claimed to be an extreme ideologue; roughly 50% of respondents described themselves as either adhering to neither ideology or as slight ideologues. Further, it should be noted that the survey question is not necessarily an accurate measure of tolerance. Future research should attempt to examine opposing, blatantly incorrect information of a political nature on social media, and its impact on politically invested ideologues with strong opinions.

Despite the lack of external validity, the study accomplished its original goals and shed light on an area that deserves more research. In any case, misinformation via memes certainly had a significant impact on survey respondents. The Internet, and social networking sites, in particular, offer a new medium through which people can consume information, express opinions, and communicate with others. Some view

cyberspace as a benevolent entity where individuals can interact with those holding opposing views and be exposed to new ideas and information, essentially increasing knowledge and tolerance. An increase in tolerance certainly seems suspect given that increased tolerance is intricately tied to an increase in specific types of knowledge. Others argue that the new medium will only increase polarization amongst the political elite and lead to decreased levels of tolerance; and that moderates will only consume the entertainment side of the web, brushing aside news and politics. Regardless, it seems unlikely that online social media and the propagation of misinformation throughout the web would produce no meaningful impact. Whether social media increases knowledge and tolerance through cross-ideological interaction, decreases the two by way of the echo chamber; has no impact; or an entirely different impact altogether; remains to be seen.

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## **The Influence of Public Opinion in the Decisions of State Supreme Court Judges**

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Scholars have continuously observed and debated the reasons behind the decisions of both federal and state judges in the United States. While there are well-established models for judicial decision-making at the federal level, these models are not consistently applicable to judicial decisions at a state level. Traditionally, there are two key theories applied by researchers to explain the different decisions made in the federal judicial systems in the United States and abroad. These theories of judicial decision-making are the legal and attitudinal models (Spaeth, 2002). The legal model is the traditional model of judicial decision-making and suggests that judges do not act on their personal policy preferences when interpreting and applying the law. The attitudinal model says that judges will make decisions based on their personal preferences and political ideologies gained from their personal experiences. Although the attitudinal model is widely accepted among political scientists to explain decisions in the United States Supreme Court, Spaeth admits that perhaps neither of these models accurately applies to the lower courts (2002). This may be because most judges in lower level and state courts remain in office at the will of other political actors, and therefore are less independent in their decisions (Savchak 2007, Canes-Wrone 2012, Shepherd 2009).

Because these two traditional judicial decision-making models lack validity when one attempts to explain the decisions of judges in state courts, many studies have sought other explanations for the decisions of state judges, particularly in state courts of last resort (Savchak 2007, Canes-

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Wrone 2012,Brace et al 2008). The study of state courts of last resort is important for several reasons. State courts of last resort resolve most of the legal disputes in the country, have the final say on issues that are fundamental to citizens' daily lives, exercise increasing levels of discretion over matters of public policy, and, for political scientists, offer opportunities to test hypotheses about judicial processes and behavior (Brace 2000). These opportunities exist due to the many different rules, selection systems, and demographics that are in each state's court of last resort. These differences make state courts of last resort ripe for comparison. This paper will compare states' different selection systems and conclude if the type of judicial selection method affects how judges make their decisions in cases.

The decisions of judges are not always easy or popular, which is why an independent judiciary is so crucial to the legal system. Unfortunately, when judges depend on public opinion for election and reelection, an unpopular decision has the potential to threaten their position on the bench. In 2014 in order to retain their positions, Tennessee Supreme Court Justices Gary Wade, Connie Clark and Sharon Lee were forced to defend their decisions in criminal cases because of a campaign against them ran by the Lieutenant Governor of the state, Ron Ramsey, who claimed the judges were too liberal in their decision-making regarding death penalty cases (Srikrishnan, 2014). During this campaign hundreds of thousands of dollars from PACs and interest groups were spent on campaign advertisements to convince the public that these justices were too soft on crime and therefore needed to be replaced (Srikrishnan, 2014). In turn the justices created a group called Keep Tennessee Courts Fair in order to raise money to fight these accusations and sway public opinion.

Ultimately, the justices won retention and were allowed to remain on the bench. But if they want to avoid another vicious campaign, these justices may have to consider public opinion more in their future decision-making. In 2010 three state Supreme Courts justices were not as lucky and lost their election due to a controversial decision that upheld the right of same-sex couples to marry (Srikrishnan, 2014). These elections and their campaigns, implemented to hold judges more accountable to the public, may make decisions of judges dependent on public opinion. The possibility of a judicial selection method, which enables public opinion to affect the decisions of judges, is problematic because it threatens judicial independence.

The theory that the type of judicial selection method applied will affect a judge's behavior is not new. States and scholars have yet to come to a consensus on how our judges should be appointed to state courts (Geyh, 2008). The United States is unique in that each individual state uses a different system to appoint state judges to the bench, each system comes with advantages and disadvantages. These judicial selection methods attempt to balance judicial independence (the idea that decisions of judges should not be influenced by outside actors) with democratic accountability (the idea that citizens should be able to hold judges responsible for their behavior). These selection systems are: gubernatorial and legislative appointment, partisan and nonpartisan election, and merit selection. Gubernatorial and legislative appointments were the first types of judicial selection to arise in the colonial courts but were criticized for the lack of accountability of the judges (Geyh, 2008). In Gubernatorial appointments, the governor of the state makes the initial appointment of the judges, while in legislative appointments, the state legislators choose the judges.

Both selection systems have become less popular throughout the years. California, Maine and New Jersey use gubernatorial appointment, and South Carolina and Virginia are the only states that use the legislative appointment method.

Partisan elections as a selection method were instituted because it was argued that elected judges would be more accountable to the people and more independent thinking than those selected by governors and legislatures (Geyh, 2008). But these judicial partisan elections were found to have some weaknesses, as some scholars have argued that partisan elections cause unqualified judges with clear policy preferences, supported by party leaders, to be elected to the bench (Geyh, 2008). This is problematic because the judges can lose their judicial independence from the political parties. Hence non-partisan elections, in which candidates run with no party affiliation, were instituted in several states to diminish party influence, although Geyh argues that this has led to even less informed voters. These non-partisan elections are also contested races and often force judicial candidates to act politically in order to gain support.

The merit selection of judges was the next method to be instituted. In the merit selection, the judges are appointed by the governor from a list of potential candidates created by nonpartisan nominating committees. After two or three years, depending on the state, the selected judges face periodic unopposed retention elections. In these elections the judges are not affiliated with any party and therefore the public has to evaluate their performance on the bench.

However, merit selections may be losing some merit. Although retention elections of judges used to be modest events, recently, as demonstrated in the aforementioned Tennessee case, they have become



increasingly politicized. Several authors attribute this politicization to the rise of the new style judicial campaigns that involve interest groups who campaign against the reelection of judges based on their decisions in often salient cases and judicial candidates announcing their policy preferences (Canes-Wrone 2010, Geyh, 2008, Gibson, 2008, Cann 2008). These new style campaigns have been found by researchers to have the ability to threaten judicial independence. Although the American Bar Association used to recommend that states use the merit system to select their judges, the recommendation was discontinued in 2003 (Geyh, 2008), because retention elections are becoming more similar to the contested partisan and nonpartisan elections. In these three types of elections, which are often unopposed, judges run campaigns that are funded by interest groups and advertise their “good” decisions, like the conviction of a murderer, and promise to make certain future decisions (Last Week Tonight with Jon Oliver Report). In turn, political parties, politicians, or private bodies that dislike the decisions of the judges can choose to run campaigns against the judges’ retention or reelection.

The election of judges is cause for concern because it weakens judicial independence. State judges are trusted to make impartial decisions on a wide array of cases. Yet several studies have found that judges change their behavior in a way more closely matched with their constituency when faced with elections (Savchak 2007, Canes-Wrone 2012, Shepherd 2009). If elections force or encourage judges to change their decision in cases, they become more like politicians than judges. Judicial elections have the potential to influence state judges to rule in favor of the popular party or the party that contributed the most to their campaign, rather than impartially ruling in favor of the deserving party according to the law.

Current justices of the U.S. Supreme Court have even recently expressed their disdain for state judicial elections. Justices Kennedy and Breyer concurred that, “When one considered that elections require candidates to conduct campaigns and to raise funds...the persisting question is whether that process is consistent with the perception and reality of judicial independence and judicial excellence” (qtd Shepherd 2009). Because most states hold elections for their judges, it is important to know if they are flawed or weaken judicial independence. Is the behavior of judges influenced by their selection method? Are elected judges more influenced by public opinion than judges appointed by state governors and legislators? Are judges elected in partisan and non-partisan elections more responsive to public opinion than judges who face retention elections?

### **Literature Review**

Many authors have studied how partisan, nonpartisan, and retention elections encourage the judges to be more strategic in their decision-making. Hall (1992) tested if minority justices in state supreme courts acted strategically when ruling cases close to reelection. In the four southern states that were observed, Hall found that judges in the minority will rule with the majority towards the end of the term, which suggests that elections influence judicial behavior. Canes-Wrone et al. (2010) studied possible changes in the decisions of state judges due to the retention election process, more specifically if judges who are up for retention elections are more responsive to public opinion on abortions. Looking at the decisions on abortion made in the highest state appellate courts in states that hold retention elections, they used mixed model to analyze the data on state Supreme Court votes. Canes-Wrone et al. (2010) found that as public opinion became more pro-choice, state judges issued more pro-

choice decisions. In a different study that was also authored by Canes-Wrone and looked at abortion cases, the authors (2009) found that on salient issues nonpartisan elections encourage popular judicial decisions, especially given the rise of these new style campaigns previously mentioned.

Similarly, but with a different approach, Brace et al.(2008)used the Brace-Hall State Supreme Court Data Archive to study the direct and indirect effects of upcoming retention elections on judicial decisions in death penalty cases. Brace found that in states where judges in the state supreme court have to be elected to retain their positions and there is a strong public support for the death penalty, the courts tend to be more conservative in their decisions. Shepherd (2009) looked at a different type salient case and found that judges who are facing reappointment favor the government more often in their decisions, although the actual cause for this pattern was not established. However, Shepherd's data set of all the state supreme court decisions from 1995 to 1998 showed that, "judges strategic voting increases as retention approaches but is almost nonexistent among judges with life tenure or those facing mandatory retirement" (1625) suggesting that approaching retention can influence decisions. Another approach taken by Lewis et al. (2014) was to study if the combination of direct democracies and retention elections increase the influence of public opinion on judicial decisions. Like Canes- Wrone, Brace, and Shephard, Lewis et al focused on a publicly salient issue and used a data set that had state judicial decisions on this issue from 1981 to 2004. They found that elected judges in direct democracy states have the potential to overturn a policy directly enacted by the public and therefore the judges are more responsive to public opinion (2014).

The previous four studies analyzed state judicial decisions in a single type of civil or criminal case, while other authors have studied the decisions in multiple types of criminal cases. Savchak et al. (2007) also tested the effect of citizen ideology in state Supreme Court judicial decisions as judges approach retention elections. Unlike Brace et al and Canes –Wrone et al, who only evaluated one type of case, Savchak et al. studied all criminal cases and used the logit model to specify the random effects related to each case. Their results showed that, “In states where citizen preferences are conservative, judges’ decisions become more pro-government as retention elections draw closer” (408), more generally supporting the theory that elections have influence on state judicial decisions (2007). Huber and Sanford (2004) studied trial court judges and their decisions in criminal cases in proximity to elections, instead of looking at state Supreme Court judges like Brace, Canes-Wrone, and Saychek. Analyzing criminal cases in Pennsylvania’s Courts of Common Pleas in the 1990’s, the authors described the relationship between the independent variable-electoral proximity and the dependent variable-assigned sentences. Huber and Sanford (2004) concluded that trial judges give harsher sentences if their reelection is close because the judges want to win the favor of the public before their retention election.

Additionally, research has compared how state judicial decisions for minorities alter from each judicial selection system. Hernandez-Julian (2014) studied how the racial populations of a defendant’s community is related to the sentence of that defendant in states that use different judicial selection methods, and found that in states where judges are elected, a black defendant is better off if there is a higher black population, while in states where judges are appointed, the black population does not

make a difference in the judge's decisions. Instead of looking at public opinion, this research is different because it looks at the minority population influence on judicial decisions involving minorities.

The majority of this past research suggests that state judges are constrained while making their decisions and that judicial elections influence judges to make popular decisions especially in salient cases. Although the research on this topic has been extensive, there are still areas in this topic that need to be researched and explored. Judges' responsiveness to the public on multiple salient issues has yet to be fully explored. A lot of studies only analyze one type of judicial selection (Canes-Wrone 2010, Brace-Hall 2008, Savchak 2009), while others do not distinguish between the different types of judicial elections. There is also little research comparing judges' responsiveness to the public on multiple different criminal cases in states that use different judicial election methods. This paper will attempt to explore these absent areas of research; it will look at all types of criminal issues and some legal issues and compare the five different selection methods impact on judicial decisions.

### **Hypotheses**

Because some judges have to face some type of election in order to get on or stay on the bench, they are accountable to and constrained by the public. Therefore in order to attain and remain in their positions, judges have to appeal to the public. In other words, in states where judicial partisan elections are held, non-partisan, and retention elections are held, the decisions of judges are more responsive to public than in states where judges are appointment because those elected judges do not want to risk losing their position.

Therefore I hypothesize that

H1: In states with judicial partisan elections, if the ideology of the state's citizens is liberal, then the judges in that state will more likely make a liberal decision.

H2: In states with judicial nonpartisan elections, if the ideology of the state's citizens is liberal, then the judges in that state will more likely make a liberal decision.

H3: In states with merit judicial selection, if the ideology of the state's citizens is liberal, then the judges in that state will more likely make a liberal decision

H4: In states where judges are appointed by a governor or the state legislature, public opinion will have little to no effect on judicial decisions.

### **Variables**

The independent variables in this study are the selection method of state: partisan and non-partisan election, merit system, and gubernatorial and legislative appointment, and the public opinion of the state. The public opinion of the state is measured using the McIver, Erikson, and Wright (2001) scores that were developed using data from CBS/ *New York Times* public opinion surveys from 1997-99, the time frame of the data set. The measure range from -2 (most conservative) to 2 (most liberal). These scores are the most appropriate to use because of their validity in past studies (e.g. Savchak 2007; Brace 2008). The dependent variable is the ideological leanings of an individual judge's vote in criminal cases. In previous studies that only looked at judges' decisions in one type of salient case, their votes or decisions could easily be dubbed as liberal or conservative, like a vote to uphold the death penalty sentence in a death penalty case is conservative. In this study, all criminal cases are studied, which means a conservative

vote has to be conceptualized a little differently. Because the cases in this data set took place in state supreme courts, they are appeal cases. In appeal cases judges decide based on procedural issues of the case rather than specific facts of the case. Despite this, as the campaign efforts in Tennessee State Supreme Court in 2014 demonstrated, decisions that rule in favor of the criminal are often dubbed to the public to be liberal, the decisions that favor the government are deemed conservative, even if the justices are ruling on procedural issues. Past research agrees with the conceptualization of decisions in criminal appeals in favor of the respondent as liberal and decisions in favor for the state or the petitioner as conservative (Brace and Hall 1995, Savchak 2007). In state supreme courts, like the United States Supreme Court, the justices often sit with up to nine other justices to rule over a case, which means one case could up to nine votes. A judge's vote will be coded 1 if it is liberal and 0 if it is conservative.

In order to ensure that the results are not caused by some influence other than the selection method, a number of variables have to be controlled. One of the control variables is the ideological preferences of each judge, measured by party-adjusted surrogate judge ideology measure, or PAJID, developed by Brace, Langer, and Hall (2000) . PAJID is the most common, valid, and reliable measure of judges' ideology, which combines the judge's partisan affiliation with the ideologies of their states at the time of appointment. The measure was used in many of research in the literature review (e.g. Savchak 2007; Brace 2008; Shepherd, 2009). The judges' ideology need to be controlled to ensure that judicial elections are the actual influence of judges' behavior and that judges are not simply ruling with their ideology. PAJID scale is from 1 to 100, with 1 as the most

conservative and 100 as the most liberal. Whether the Supreme Court sits en banc is also included as a control because it can influence the type of cases the courts hears. In states where courts do sit en banc, litigants are placed in front of all the judges and can anticipate the ideology of those judges, but in those states where judges do not sit en banc, litigants will not know which judge will decide their case and therefore can not predict their ideology, which will discourage an appeal (Shepherd 2009). The states that sit en banc will be coded as 1 and the states that do not will be coded as 0.

### **Data and Method**

To test this hypothesis, the study will use data from the State Supreme Court Data Project archive (SSCDA). Until 1996, when this data set was in process, there was not a reliable and organized fifty state data set on state courts that combine case judge and contextual variables (Brace-Hall 2000). More specifically this database has 21,296 cases in courts of last resorts in all 50 states in the period 1995-97 and each case had 423 variables. The variables include case type (criminal, civil private, civil public, etc.), case issues justice voting, judge characteristics like age and political ideology score, measured by PAJID, and state characteristics like the judicial selection method and the states' citizens' ideological score, measured by EWI. Most of the studies (Savchak 2007, Brace 2008, Shepherd 2009) used this data set, which includes decisions made in the late 1990s.

The cases used in this study will come from the nine states that hold partisan elections, thirteen that hold nonpartisan elections, fourteen states that hold retention elections, and three states that hold gubernatorial or legislative appointments. Several states were excluded



from this study because of their unique judicial selection methods. For example Delaware and New York were excluded from the study because their judges are reappointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. Hawaii was excluded because in their system a nominating commission retains the judges every ten years. Massachusetts and Rhode Island were excluded because judges there have life tenure. Vermont was excluded because they retain their position through a vote in the Senate. Maine, Nebraska and New Jersey were also excluded.

The study will examine all criminal cases because it has been found that only a small number of cases in the SSCDA are salient issues to the public. The majority of studies on this topic also tend to only analyze one type of case issue like the death penalty (Brace 2008) and abortion (Canes-Wrone 2010), which is problematic because those results are inapplicable to other types of case issues. If my hypotheses are correct, it will suggest that judicial elections compel the judges in state supreme courts to make popular decisions in all areas of criminal law.

To test the hypotheses, this study used a binary logistic regression model because the dependent variable, judge vote, is dichotomous, and I want to know whether it has a relationship with the independent variable, public opinion, and whether the independent variable is causing a change in the dependent variable.

## **Results**

To achieve the results on the charts below, all the criminal cases were selected out of the SSCDA data set and placed into a different sheet. Then the cases in the new sheet were split up by their judicial selection method and analyzed. The table below shows the results of the binary logistic regression model of decisions made by state Supreme Court judges

in partisan, nonpartisan, merit, and appointment systems between 1995 and 1997. The results show strong support for H1, H2, H3, and H4.

First, all of the coefficients for public opinion (EWI) are statistically significant. As public opinion in states with partisan, non-partisan, and merit election systems become more liberal, judges in those state supreme courts are slightly more likely to make a liberal decision. In other words the ideological preferences of the citizens in states that hold judicial elections has an effect on the vote of the state supreme court judge in a criminal case.

Meanwhile in states with judicial appointments, the preferences of the citizens have a negative relationship with the judges' votes. This may be because in those states either the legislative branch or the governor, or both in conjunction, appoints and reappoints the judge and hence the ideological preferences of the legislative branch or the governor are more influential in the judges' decision-making than public opinion.

The ideology of the judge (PAJID) held no effect on the votes of judges in states with partisan and appointment systems, but had a really slight effect on the votes of judges in states with merit and non-partisan systems. This may be because in states with non-partisan elections and unopposed retention elections, the state Supreme Court judges have more room to act on their own preferences because they do not represent a political party.

In merit selection systems, there is a stronger relationship between the vote of the judge and sitting en banc than the vote of the judge and the citizens' preferences. Perhaps justices can be influenced or convinced by the other justices they sit with during cases.

Although the hypotheses were confirmed, these results should be looked upon with caution. Some of the variables that have the potential to affect the vote of judge like term limits and years on the bench were excluded from this study due to time for extensive research and further data collection. Another variable I would have liked to include is the proximity to elections during the decision. There is also possible human error in these results. Over 30,000 votes, 14,446 from states with partisan elections, 12, 992, from states with non partisan elections, and 2,186 from states with judicial legislative and gubernatorial appointments, were used to get the calculations below, which makes it really easy to miss an error. The amounts of votes from states with non-partisan elections and legislative and gubernatorial elections are smaller because fewer states used those systems at the time of the data collection.

### Partisan Elections

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> EWI	.191	.022	73.161	1	.000	1.211	1.159	1.265
pajid	-.003	.001	7.136	1	.008	.997	.994	.999
enbanc	-.716	.058	153.690	1	.000	.489	.436	.547
Constant	.269	.074	13.312	1	.000	1.309		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: EWI, pajid, enbanc.

### Non-Partisan Elections

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> EWI	.305	.019	247.274	1	.000	1.356	1.306	1.409
pajid	.003	.001	6.855	1	.009	1.003	1.001	1.005
enbanc	.219	.056	15.334	1	.000	1.245	1.116	1.389
Constant	-.802	.065	152.945	1	.000	.448		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: EWI, pajid, enbanc.

**Merit**

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> EWVI	.221	.023	92.725	1	.000	1.248	1.193	1.305
pajid	.007	.001	75.824	1	.000	1.007	1.005	1.008
enbanc	.287	.040	52.089	1	.000	1.333	1.233	1.441
Constant	-.945	.042	518.158	1	.000	.389		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: EWVI, pajid, enbanc.

**Appointment**

Variables in the Equation

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Step 1 <sup>a</sup> EWVI	-.029	.043	.467	1	.494	.971	.893	1.056
pajid	.000	.002	.027	1	.869	1.000	.996	1.003
enbanc	-.301	.102	8.669	1	.003	.740	.606	.904
Constant	-.123	.104	1.397	1	.237	.884		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: EWVI, pajid, enbanc.

**Conclusion**

Despite the lack of control variables, this study suggests that judges who face elections in state Supreme Courts rule more closely to public opinion. The focus of this study was the effect of different judicial selection methods and public opinion on judicial behavior. After analyzing all criminal cases in from 1995-1997 in states that have partisan, non partisan, merit or retention, and appointment systems, it was determined that in states that hold judicial elections, if the public opinion is liberal, then the vote of the judge is more likely to be liberal. In the United States, 9/10 of state court judges are accountable to the public through some type of election (Shepherd 2009). Although the results are small and should be taken with caution, any variable that influences the decisions of judges even a little has the potential to weaken the legitimacy of the judicial system. In order for justice to occur the law should be applied equally and impartially no matter the ideological makeup of the public. Unfortunately according to the results of this study, the results of the studies in the literature review,

and the recent campaigns in Tennessee and Iowa, this is not the case throughout the country. Judges at all levels of state courts have to act like politicians and appeal to the public in order to get on the bench and to stay on the bench. If future studies on more current cases yield similar results, reform to the judiciary in order to maintain judicial independence might be necessary. Or perhaps “an independent judiciary” will cease to exist. For now this study contributes to the century long debate over best and proper judicial selection system in states courts.

For future research, the influence of interests groups, PACs, politicians, and lawyers over the decisions of judges in certain cases should be determined. Interest groups and PACs are some the reasons judicial elections evolved from low-key affairs to high key political events. (Brace 2008, Canes –Wrone 2010, Srikrishnan, 2014). Some judges are on the bench due to the contributions of PACs, interest groups, politicians and lawyers. It would be interesting to study if the judges rule in favor of these contributors. Moreover PACs, interests groups, some lawyers and politicians are probably more likely to support corrupt candidates to ensure their future favor rather than the candidates with the most merit. Another suggestion for future research would be a comparison of the effect of public opinion on judicial votes and the effect of interest group contributions on judges’ votes to see which has a higher effect.

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## **What's Ours Isn't Yours: Measuring the Successes of the Radical Right Across Strong and Weak Welfare States**

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On December 6th, 2015, National Front, France's most prominent far-right party, received 28% of the total votes in the first round of France's regional elections. This recent showing of the National Front is neither unprecedented nor surprising. Under the leadership of the highly conservative and nationalistic Marine Le Pen, the party amassed 25% of the French seats in European Parliament in 2014. Though it's tempting to attribute the success of nativist parties, such as National Front, to concerns across Europe over refugees, these fears do not account for the full scope of radical right success in the region. A more nuanced understanding of the success of National Front and parties similar to it across Europe can be ascertained by examining the qualities specific to the state in which they are based. In the case of France, the European state that designates the highest percentage of its GDP to social welfare programs, the success of the National Front is not a phenomena clearly extricable from the nation's large welfare state. Europe has seen an explosion in the amount of immigrants received over the past fifty years; in this time, the percent immigrant population in Western Europe has tripled, producing a political climate eager to lend its fecundity to radical right, anti-immigrant parties (Stockemer 2016).

There has been considerable scholarly attention paid to the rise of radical right parties as they've steadily gained traction across Europe. The impressive showing by the National Front and other far-right parties in states such as Denmark and Austria in the European Parliamentary

elections suggests that the attention paid to these parties is warranted, as members of the radical right find themselves in positions conducive to affecting policy, both nationally and across the European Union. Thus far, much attention has been paid to a few significant variables in explaining the rise of the Radical Right, such as the ethnic heterogeneity that accompanies increased rates of immigration (Achterberg, Koster and van der Waal 2012). The existence of immigration and a general disdain for the “other” is central to most Radical-Right platforms. One common platform item utilized by these parties to mobilize voters is rooted in welfare chauvinist attitudes (Achterberg, Koster and van der Waal 2012). Party members espousing these attitudes stress that the welfare systems in a given state are designated solely for the people native to that state, warning that the reliance on the system by non-natives detracts from the system’s ability to provide for its native population (Achterberg, Koster and van der Waal 2012). Though various scholars disagree on the effectiveness of the welfare chauvinism approach to forming solid constituencies, none have taken into account how the size of a state’s social spending affects the radical right’s ability to do so.

Therefore, this research seeks to empirically evaluate the credibility of the welfare chauvinist approach as it might be reflected in the successes (and failures) of radical right parties in states with disparate levels of social spending, which has thus been largely ignored in the literature. This gap is substantial, given that it would seem that the capacity of a state’s welfare system would have some effect on the far right’s ability to mobilize voters using this approach (Rydgren 2008). Therefore, I argue that this voter-mobilization approach has been unfairly cast aside by scholars who’ve ignored the percent of a state’s GDP appropriated for

social spending. Taking into account social spending as an independent variable, I intend to look at secondary quantitative data to establish whether or not there is a correlation between generous welfare programs and the electoral successes of the radical right in that state. In doing so, this research can answer whether or not the welfare chauvinist hypothesis for the success of the radical right is dependent on the extent to which the state in question is a welfare state in question.

### **Literature Review**

There exists a surfeit of literature probing the relationship between anti-immigration sentiment in welfare states, and the prominence of radical right and nativist parties in these regions. In the past two decades, the phenomenon of radical right parties gaining traction (particularly in Europe) has enjoyed considerable attention. It's commonly held that these parties mobilize voters based on four basic political tenants: immigration threatens cultural identity, takes jobs away from natives, increases crime, and hyper-extends the welfare state (Zaslove 2004). The latter of the four—the concern that high rates of immigration cause undue strain on the welfare state—is most pertinent to the research I intend to conduct, which asks whether or not states with highly generous welfare programs foster the success of radical right parties.

Although I do not intend to measure the anti-immigrant sentiment across nations that gives rise to these parties, I must examine the literature surrounding these attitudes to appropriately conceptualize what the radical right represents to voters. Because radical right parties and pundits seek to mobilize voters based on a supposed immigrant strain on social services and threat to the “common man”, it is worth asking whether the research exists to substantiate the claim that immigrants target areas with expansive

welfare programs (Nordensvard & Ketola 2015). This concept of the “welfare magnet” has been addressed in regard to immigration in the work of Borjas (1999), which substantiates that immigrants do often engage in wealth-maximizing behavior by pre-selecting states to immigrate to on the virtue of their social expenditure. Based on Borjas’ findings, it can be said that the platforms of radical right parties are in part based on a phenomenon that actually exists, rather than on baseless fear mongering in their constituencies. Still, research suggests that the hard numbers of immigrants within a given region is hardly a predictor for radical right success; electoral gains by these parties are more contingent on the electorate’s perception of the number of immigrants (Stockemer 2016). Thus, Borjas’ (1999) findings have little bearing on how immigrants are received in their host countries, and are therefore a poor predictor for radical right success. The subjective perceptions of voters are far more likely to bolster support for nativist parties than are the statistics presented by Borjas (Stockemer 2016; Borjas 1999).

Given that the anti-immigrant sentiment responsible for the rise of nativist parties is not informed by rising numbers of immigrants, it needs to be explored to what degree does the level of ethnic heterogeneity in a nation give way to the attitudes represented by the radical right (Stockemer 2016). Alesana and Glaeser (2004) have posited no small amount of work answering how ethnic heterogeneity affects welfare policy and other issues of concern to nativist parties. This question relates to my own insofar as it is acknowledged that radical right parties gain traction when ethnic sameness in a country is challenged (Rydgren 2008). Much of Alesana and Glaeser’s work posits that strong welfare states with high social spending have a pre-condition of ethnic homogeneity (2004). Their

work is often cited as a seminal text in the discourse surrounding the welfare state and ethnic heterogeneity, having constructed an explanation for the relatively weak support for social spending the United States compared to various affluent democracies in Europe (Alesina and Glaeser 2004). Prior to this text, Alesina, Baqir and Easterly (1999) came to a similar conclusion, alleging “native” discontent when they perceived that their tax-funded social programs were primarily affording privileges to the “other”, suggesting that a narrative of immigrant drain on welfare resources was a very real concern to the people of the United States.

The theory of ethnic competition in the context of public expenditure in ethnically heterogeneous climates has risen to prominence in other works as well. Eger (2010) finds support for this theory in her analysis of Sweden, from which she has found consistent results that large influxes of immigration bode poorly for attitudes towards spending on the public sector. Eger’s paper takes into account the particularly generous nature of the Swedish welfare state, which relegates the highest percentage of its GDP in the world on social expenditure, coupled with very recent trends away from ethnic homogeneity (Eger 2010). In addition, the backlash to immigration demonstrated in declining support for social spending in Sweden illustrated in Eger’s paper lends plausibility to the idea that high levels of social spending could make a public more inclined to support the platforms of anti-immigrant parties. The literature also suggests that radical right parties in Europe have mobilized voters on the basis of ethnic competition theory; this is notable, as it identifies a primary channel by which radical right parties are able to seize anti-immigrant sentiment for the purposes of garnering support (Rydgren & Ruth 2011). The presence of negative domestic economic factors, such as

unemployment, are also commonly evaluated as an impetus for higher levels of anti-immigration sentiment and a decline in support for welfare (Gorodzeisky, Raijman and Semyonov 2006; Rydgren and Ruth 2011).

A myriad of scholars have pointed to weaknesses in these works. Contrary to Alesina and Glaeser, Girdes' (2011) findings failed to locate a relationship between anti-immigrant sentiment and public sector spending. Girdes's (2011) conclusions are consistent with a separate body of literature that subverts the correlation between ethnic heterogeneity and weakened support for welfare to the institutional strength of welfare states. However, Girdes merely measures the actual change in welfare policy, rather than concerted efforts to change it by radical right and nativist parties. Therefore, though there might be considerable impediments to changing welfare policies, such as strong and durable welfare institutions, the lack of change in welfare policy is not necessarily a reflection of the efforts to change such policies. Still, other research has found that anti-immigration attitudes have indeed shaped public policy in meaningful ways in looking at countries outside Girdes's scope (Zaslove 2004). The implications of these conflicting findings suggest that there are country-level independent variables that affect a country's vulnerability to a far-right initiated policy shift. The amount of welfare spending in a state is one of these unexamined variables and therefore merits further investigation.

The role of welfare-chauvinist attitudes in affecting public sentiment and immigration policy is also fairly well documented. Brady and Finnigan (2014) attempt to refocus the discourse around anti-welfare attitudes and immigration by shifting the focus from ethnic fractionalization (Alesina and Glaeser 2004) to a compensation hypothesis

and welfare chauvinism hypothesis. In the former, immigration heightens the perception that jobs are low, and those who stand to benefit from generous welfare packages are more inclined to support the welfare state; this would suggest that heightened levels of immigration would bolster these sentiments and increase support for radical right and nativist parties. In the latter, individuals will support welfare policies that seems likely to help those with whom they racially, ethnically, or culturally identify (Brady and Finnigan 2014).

Viewing popular support for social welfare through the latter framework, the likelihood that native citizens would be wary to endow 'outsiders' with welfare services decreases drastically. The welfare chauvinism hypothesis is particularly important in this scenario, as it suggests that radical right parties can still mobilize voters based on perceived over-use of welfare systems by immigrants, even in the case that support for high social spending has not diminished. The immigration discourse is said to have been reframed entirely by these far-right parties in some cases; more emphasis on what scholars have referred to as the "welfare nation-state," intimately linking the ideas of national identity and entitlement to the spoils of welfare spending (Nordensvard and Ketola 2015). The notion of the welfare nation-state is consistent with one of the underlying themes of this paper, namely the idea that strong welfare states are especially likely to be framed by the radical right as a sort of welfare nation-state, in which the in-group is deserving and the out-group is not.

Other works on welfare chauvinism have produced similar results, with some caveats; the case has also been made that although the success of radical right parties corresponds closely to anti-immigration platforms, the welfare issue itself is often not the one most pressing in the minds of

voters when deciding which party to vote for (Achterberg, Koster and van der Waal 2012; Rydgren, 2008). Achterberg's findings suggest that anti-immigration sentiment and radical right parties should be less politically relevant in states with very generous welfare programs (Achterberg, Koster and van der Waal 2012). However, in reaching this conclusion, Achterberg only looks at one state, rendering this conclusion limited in its usefulness. The authors do point to percent GDP for welfare spending as a variable that has been neglected in most of the literature as a possible jumping-off point for future research, which this paper intends to address (Achterberg, Koster and van der Waal 2012). Rydgren (2008) also fails to take into account welfare expenditure across states before concluding that welfare chauvinist rhetoric is inconsequential in mobilizing voters.

Also of interest to this paper is the literature surrounding nations that haven't seen a surge in radical right wing parties, despite embodying the conditions thought to be conducive to their formation-(O'Malley 2006). Though O'Malley posits a few explanations for this absence, such as Ireland's lack of colonial legacies in regions from which immigrants might come from, he overlooks the relatively weak Irish welfare state as a possible explanatory factor (2006). Another EU nation with a lack of a strong radical right presence is Estonia (Kasekamp 2003). Although the negligible radical right parties in Estonia espouse the same nativist and Eurosceptic ideologies as those in fellow EU nations, these parties, like the Irish, have failed to gain momentum (Kasekamp 2003). Kasekamp acknowledges Estonian liberal economic policies (and aversion to social spending and subsidies) as potential deterrent for the formation of radical right parties, like those seen in the Nordic countries with large welfare states (2003). Therefore, economic liberalism and aversion to socialized



programs in Estonia seems to be the primary reason that far-right parties (which are mostly in agreement with this national ideology) are not successful (Kasekamp 2003). Moreover, low welfare expenditure could be a factor in deterring radical-right success in Estonia and Ireland. As these nations have among the lowest percent GDP welfare spending, there is ostensibly little at stake in terms of sharing these resources with non-natives.

In evaluating the successes of the radical right in terms of anti-immigration platforms, Zaslove (2004) goes a step further in identifying the success rates of these parties in prompting state adaptation of anti-immigration policy. His work deals explicitly with radical right parties that have successfully joined governing coalitions. In both of the studies examined, it's found that once radical right parties join governing coalitions, they are often successful in passing policy at the expense of immigrants (Zaslove 2004); these findings suggest that radical right parties, long considered pariahs in the political realm, have gained considerable traction, effecting change to welfare and immigration policies via governing coalitions. In considering why these parties are able to prosper in some countries and not in others, examining the welfare structures themselves, particularly in terms of the generosity of these programs, will be worthwhile in elucidating whether or not there is a correlation between high public spending and the emergence of the radical right into political prominence.

### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis being explored in this paper posits a positive correlation between the amount of social spending in a state (independent variable) and the electoral success of Radical Right Parties in European

countries, (dependent variable). Specifically, I hypothesize that large welfare expenditures within a state increase the likelihood that the state will have a strong Radical Right presence. My hypothesis builds on the welfare chauvinist approach to understanding the rise of Radical Right parties, which suggests that natives of a state may vote for the radical right due to fears that non-deserving members of society (i.e.; immigrants) hyper-extend the welfare state and diminish the resources available to natives. I extrapolate upon this and assume that citizens in strong welfare states are more apprehensive to give the benefits they enjoy up to individuals they perceive as “others,” or non-natives. Therefore, the strength of the welfare state has implications for the level of anti-immigrant sentiment, which is indicated by the electoral success of radical right parties. If my hypothesis is correct, the welfare chauvinist approach used by the radical right to mobilize voters should be effective in strong welfare states, but not weak ones.

### **Research Design**

Because I’m relying on secondary data-sets, the conceptualizations of my variables are tailored more closely to those data sets than they might have been otherwise. The independent variable, the amount of social spending in a country, is conceptualized as the percentage of a state’s GDP spent on these services. This data is available from the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development. For the purposes of this research, I’ll be looking specifically at the year 2014 (the most recent year European Parliamentary elections took place). Though private sector social expenditure is also represented in this data, I will not be taking it into account, as I’m seeking to identify only the government resources and tax dollars that are being fed into these programs. This is because social

expenditure from the private sector is less likely to incite resentment towards “outsiders” and welfare chauvinist attitudes, which mobilizes voters to support radical right parties. Since the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development provides the best representation of this data, my research design is also limited to the countries comprising their analysis. This precludes most non-European nations, though there are exceptions, such as the United States, Canada, Japan, and Mexico. However, because I’m comparing this data with European Parliament elections, my design is based only on the European states included in the OECD data-set. The OECD’s definition of social spending is the following:

“Social expenditure is the provision by public (and private\*) institutions of benefits to, and financial contributions targeted at, households and individuals in order to provide support during circumstances which adversely affect their welfare, provided that the provision of the benefits and financial contributions constitutes neither a direct payment for a particular good or service nor an individual contract or transfer.”

The data presented by the OECD effectively indicates the size of the welfare state within each given country. Based on my hypothesis, states with larger welfare expenditures should have prominent radical right presences.

The dependent variable, the success/failure of radical right parties within states, is conceptualized using data from the European Parliament. The Parliamentary data reflects the votes gained by Radical Right parties in these elections compared with other national parties, and therefore indicates the willingness of the population of a given state to vote for the far-right and the success of these parties in domestic politics. It’s worth

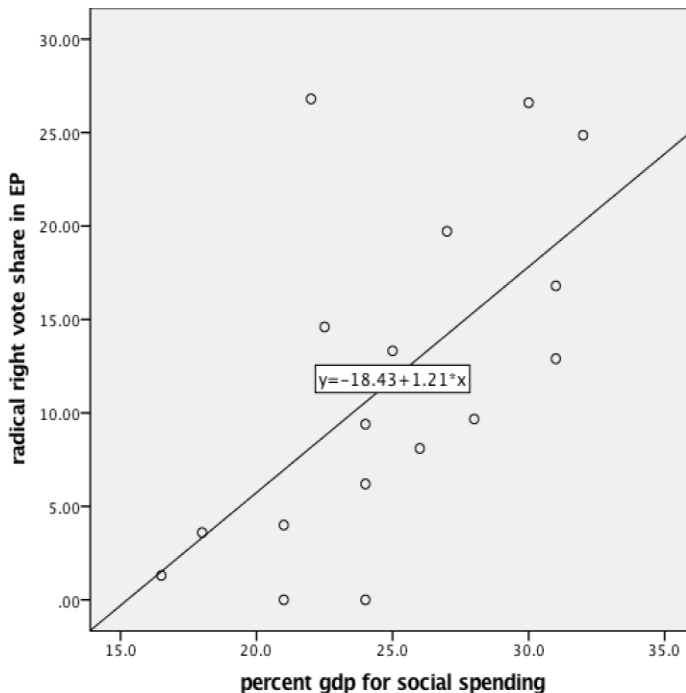
noting that turn-outs for these elections varies across the scope of nations represented in the data: for example, while turnout in Belgium was almost 90% in the 2014 election, turnout in Slovakia was only 13%. Due to the necessity of including these nations in the analysis despite their low voter turnout, I've not precluded them from the intended research. However, the varying turnouts might affect the conclusions ascertained using this model. To account for this, I will control for each state's given "political participation" level on the democracy index from the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2014.

Also to be considered is that election results in the European Parliament are often different than those in national parliamentary elections. While some radical right parties might perform exceptionally well in European Parliament, their showings in national elections might be weaker, and vice versa. This is a necessary trade-off; by using the data from the European Parliamentary elections, certain variables (such as the year they were conducted) are consistent across the countries represented in the data. Finally, due to the nature of my sources, my analysis will be confined to nations that are both members of the OECD and the European Union. Although it does risk missing potentially valuable data, limiting the scope is ultimately beneficial to the model. By focusing on only EU nations, variability across political systems (such as multi-party versus two-party) plays a lesser role in determining the success of the far right, as the bulk of EU nations use a system based on proportional representation, often thought to be conducive to multi-party competitive elections. By evaluating the effect of the independent variable of social spending on the dependent variable of radical right representation through quantitative data sets, a substantive correlation might become apparent.

Because high levels of ethnic heterogeneity prevails in the literature as being strongly correlated with large welfare expenditures, I've included a second analysis controlling for the percentage of the population comprised of immigrants in each state included in the model. This data is sourced from the 2014 Eurostat.

## Results

I conducted an Ordinary Least Squares Regression to determine whether or not a positive correlation exists between the percent of a state's GDP spent on social services (the independent variable) and the vote share received by Radical Right parties from each state received in European Parliamentary elections (the dependent variable). The sample size consisted of seventeen states in total, predominately in Western Europe, but with some from Central and Eastern Europe as well.



The OLS demonstrates that the percentage of GDP used on social spending within a state can account for 37.6% (.376 r-square) of the variance in the success of the radical right in European Parliament. Based on the output data, a one unit change in the independent variable would result in a 1.208 unit change in the dependent variable. Despite the low r-squared value, I'm able to reject my null hypothesis due to the low p-value (.005).

In light of my low r-squared value, I added two additional explanatory variables to my model using a multiple linear regression in an attempt to improve it. The first added variable was the rating of political participation according to a democracy index. My thinking was that low levels of political participation might contribute to greater success of radical right parties, as voters on the more extreme margins of the political spectrum might be generally more inclined to make their voices heard. A low political participation rating would indicate a blow to the turnout of more moderate voters, but would not necessarily indicate the deterrence of radical voters. The second added variable is the percentage of the population in a given country comprised of immigrants. In testing this, I gauged the applicability of the "ethnic heterogeneity" hypothesis on radical right successes, contesting Stockemer's claim that the number of immigrants in a country has little correlation with the success of its radical right parties (Stockemer 2015).

Ultimately, controlling for both of these variables did not improve the model. Although it increased the r-squared value marginally, neither variable proved statistically significant in refuting the null hypothesis associated with them.

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-16.320	12.203		-1.337	.204
	percent immigrant population	.170	.453	.090	.376	.713
	political participation index	-.840	1.742	-.128	-.482	.638
	percent gdp for social spending	1.292	.489	.656	2.642	.020

a. Dependent Variable: radical right vote share in EP

## Conclusion

In carrying out this research, I was able to accept my hypothesis. High social spending in a state correlates with a larger radical right presence elected to governing bodies, though significant reservations remain. The relatively small number of cases included in the model impedes its potential explanatory power. Those researching the radical right going forward would benefit from looking at a more vast body of states, perhaps extending their scope beyond Europe. Although this data included some Eastern European states, it was heavily dominated by those in the West; research in this area going forward would benefit from extending the scope beyond Western and Central Europe, especially as Eastern European states continue to experience higher rates of immigration due to the current refugee crisis.

Furthermore, those seeking to build on this body of research would do well to incorporate the percentage of immigrants not from other EU member states as a control variable; even though I sought to evaluate immigration as a factor for determining the success of the radical right, it seems likely that the origin of immigrants is more likely to explain welfare chauvinist attitudes than immigration levels themselves. The Welfare

Chauvinism hypothesis is particularly applicable when individuals perceive immigrants as “others”, rather than those from countries they perceive as culturally similar. Additionally, rather than using ‘percent of population’ made up of immigrants, it would be beneficial to include the percent increase or decrease over the course of multiple election cycles to better establish the effect of immigration levels on radical right success.

This research presents an important theme in radical right rhetoric used to mobilize voters. As these parties continue to gain traction in light of concerns of citizens in regard to the economic impact of immigrants entering their native state, scholarly attention toward these institutions will likely remain significant. As radical right parties go on to accumulate more credibility and clout in governing bodies, gaining the predictive power to recognize the factors consistent with their success will be critical.



## **Appendix A**

Vote share: European Parliament

(<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>)

Percent GDP social spending: OECD social expenditure database

(<http://www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm>)

Percent immigrant population: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>)

Political participation democracy index: democracy index 2014 ([eiu.com](http://eiu.com))

## Appendix B

radical right party	country	vote share in 2014 EP	percent GDP for social spending in 2014	percent immigrant population in 2014	political participation democracy index
national front (france)	france	24.86	32	11.6	7.78
finns party	finland	12.9	31	5.5	7.78
new flemish alliance (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie)	belgium	16.8	31	15.8	5.56
danish peoples party (dansk folkeparti)	denmark	26.6	30	10.1	8.33
Sweden democrats (Sverigedemokraterna)	sweden	9.67	28	15.9	9.44
austrian freedom party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs)	austria	19.72	27	16.6	8.83
National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands) and Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)	germany	8.1	26	12.2	7.78
party for freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid)	netherlands	13.32	25	11.6	8.89
golden dawn	greece	9.4	24	11.4	6.67
northern league (lega nord)	italy	6.2	24	9.4	7.22
Partido Nacional Renovador	portugal	0	24	8.2	6.67
movement for a better hungary (jobbik)	hungary	14.6	22.5	4.5	4.44
United Kingdom Independence Party	united kingdom	26.8	22	12.5	6.67
united poland (solidarna Polska)	poland	4	21	1.6	6.67
no notable party	ireland	0	21	16.1	7.78
slovak national party (Slovenská národná strana)	slovakia	3.6	18	3.2	5.56
estonian independence party (Eesti Iseseisvuspartei)	estonia	1.3	16.5	14.9	5.56

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## **Fear, Confidence, and Corporal Punishment: An Analysis of Potential Factors Impacting Death Penalty Support Among Americans**

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It is perhaps the most severe exercise of power to legally take a person's life in the name of justice. It is written in the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that cruel and unusual punishment shall be prohibited. However, the subjective interpretation of what constitutes "cruel" and "unusual" punishment has created more questions than answers. For instance, some suggest that the cocktail of drugs administered to numb, paralyze, and stop the heart could be considered cruel and unusual. Others say the same for the electric chair.

These contentions do not account for the unintended consequences of a botched proceeding. It is also potentially cruel to issue a death sentence for an accused individual who was, in fact, innocent, as any error on the part of the state would be irrevocable. It is no small wonder that the most expensive aspect of the death penalty process is the system of lengthy appeals, which is intended to reduce the chance of irrevocable error. There is also real concern that the death penalty is severely skewed against minorities. However, many Americans believe that capital punishment helps to deter crime and reduce community deaths. Of all of the Western industrialized nations, the United States of America stands alone in its exercise of capital punishment.

Over the past several decades, popular opinion regarding the death penalty in the U.S. has been positive. Its use remains an option both federally and in many states, and continues to thrive in some of the more

punitive southern states. By understanding more about the trends of death penalty support, Americans can discover why this practice remains in the U.S. Moreover, death penalty findings in this area may have practical implications. The more we understand about the demographics of death penalty support amongst Americans, the better we can engage and educate specific groups on the policy's ineffectiveness and unequal application.

For the purposes of this paper I will use the terms "capital punishment," "death penalty," and the abbreviation "DP" interchangeably. Similarly, I will use the terms, "spanking," "corporal punishment," and the abbreviation "CP" interchangeably.

This study utilizes secondary data from the General Social Survey (GSS), a non-government entity that attempts to understand public opinion about far-ranging topics of national interest. In the context of this research, I am concerned with the factors that lead individuals to—approve or disapprove of the application of the death penalty for convicted murderers. While I acknowledge that there are likely a number of plausible factors that have influenced the continued death penalty support (DPS) for convicted murderers in the United States, my research focuses on three: support for corporal punishment of children, fear of crime, and lack of confidence in the judicial system.

## **Literature Review:**

### **Death Penalty Support (DPS)**

Relevant literature regarding public support for capital punishment confirms that certain demographic traits can predict the likelihood of individuals' death penalty support (DPS). Barkan and Cohn (1994) researched why white individuals are more likely to support the death

penalty than black individuals by measuring antipathy and negative racial stereotypes as a predictor of DPS, using the 1990 General Social Survey. These researchers asked questions concerning the extent to which respondents negatively stereotyped black people to be lazy, unintelligent, etc. They found positive correlations between white respondents who are antipathetic toward blacks ( $P \leq .001$ ), hold racial stereotypes ( $P \leq .01$ ), and have high DPS. Support was also significant in association with conservatism and lower levels of education.

Soss, Langbein, and Metelko (2003) examined survey data from the 1992 American National Election Study (ANES) and 1990 U.S. Census and found the strongest positive relationship between DPS ( $P \leq .01$ ) and prejudiced white individuals who also tested as more authoritarian. They also found statistically significant relationships ( $p \leq .05$ ) to DPS between white respondents with low interpersonal trust and white individuals who had a high trust in government

In the two studies above, by Barkan and Cohn (1994) and Soss, Langbein, and Metelko (2003), there was a significant split in responses that were dependent on the race of the respondent. In these studies, the majority of DP proponents were white (Soss, Langbein, and Metelko); 82.8 percent of whites supported the DP in comparison to only 55.5 percent of black respondents.

### **Authoritarianism**

Research has shown that those who exemplify authoritarian personalities may also be more prone to support the death penalty. Altemeyer's (1981) research into this topic was nothing short of groundbreaking. His research dealt with individuals' inclinations for the following dimensions: "submissiveness to authority figures,

conventionalism, and a propensity to engage in aggression sanctioned by authority figures,” (Benjamin, 2006, p. 924). Altemeyer developed the Right Wing Authoritarian Scale to measure levels of support for the established authority figures in one’s society.

Altemeyer found that “prejudice has little to do with the groups it targets, and a lot to do with the personality of the holder” (Altemeyer, p. 24, 2006); as his research suggested, people who scored high on the Right Wing Authoritarian Scale, RWAs, were likely to be racist as well as politically conservative. Additionally, high RWAs were more sensitive to perceiving danger in uncertain situations. As a whole this group of individuals felt more threatened than most in circumstances that were potentially dangerous-- frequently responding with aggression. Authoritarian followers also tended to carry the trait of aggression when supported by numbers and when acting in name of the established ideals of a recognized authority (e.g., in a lynch mob, war, or capital punishment). This was supported by the fact that these people advocated for much longer incarceration lengths than the average citizen in every category of crime, and as a group tended to strongly support capital punishment, especially as applied to people against whom they were prejudiced. This was because RWAs strongly believed in the “beneficial effects of punishment” (Altemeyer, 2006, p.23) and were particularly repulsed by criminals, thereby treating crime more seriously than most.

### **Fear of Crime**

There are inconsistent findings regarding whether the fear of crime correlates with increased DPS. Studies conducted by Unnever (2010) and Lacey and Soskice (2015) suggest that there is a link between increased support for capital punishment and an individual’s history of victimization.



A person who had previously been a victim of crime would be more likely to approve of extreme measures of punishment on criminals, possibly due to a victim's strengthened fear of crime. The GSS measured this variable by asking whether people are afraid of walking alone within a mile of the respondent's location (at the time of the survey) at night. The logic behind the suspected relationship between DPS and fear of crime was best described by Unnever (2007). In his article, "A liberal is someone who has not been mugged," Unnever followed the logic that someone who had never been the victim of a crime may be more sympathetic to criminals, and that once the person is attacked he will be forced to confront the reality of crime. In other words, this crime would prompt one to reevaluate whether criminals are truly "'victims of society' as opposed to architects of their own fates" (p. 314). Unnever used the GSS for several different time periods and found that past victimization had no effect on DPS and that the fear of crime on DPS was weak, but that past victimization was positively correlated with opposition to preferential treatment of blacks. These results suggest that past victimization may be more closely related to a person's racial biases than DP support. In Stack's (2000) study, five indicators for crime salience were measured to determine if people who were past victims of crime, had a fear of crime, or were punitive were more likely to support the DP. The only variable that was significant was punitiveness, as it positively correlated with increased DPS. The Barkan and Cohn (1994) study only revealed a positive, weak relationship between DPS and fear of crime, as measured using the same question as the indicator for fear in this study.

Other research, such as Keil and Vito's (1991), found a positive link between fear of crime and DPS. In their survey of 619 Kentuckian

households in 1989, they measured perceived neighborhood safety and DPS. They found that the majority of Kentuckians locked their doors (70%), did not think break-ins were a big problem (52%), and felt safe walking in their neighborhoods in the evening (70%). Kentuckians were also largely supportive of the death penalty (71%) and supported the DP if involved more than one person (76%), drugs (76%), and was premeditated (84%). They also found that a number of variables (i.e., being old, black, female, and having a low level of education) directly influenced fear, which in turn significantly affected individuals' death penalty attitudes. People who had been victimized in the past year were also likely to have fears about the safety of their neighborhoods, and the more residents felt unsafe in their neighborhoods, the more likely they were to be punitive. Keil and Vito also found that blacks and women were less likely to support the DP, which checks out with the previous research on the demographics of DPS. In summary, there was inconclusive evidence that fear of crime positively correlates with DPS, which suggests that fear could be an indirect factor in support for capital punishment.

### **Low Confidence in Courts and Legal System**

Before delving into the relevant research on the relationship between confidence in the judicial system and DPS, a word of caution is in order. The concepts of confidence in the justice system and legal system and trust in the government go hand-in-hand, and it follows that a person who is paranoid that their government is too easy on criminals would likely not have much trust in the judicial system. However, the relationship between trusting the government and having interpersonal trust may not be as clear. If a person has a high level of trust in the government, he may or may not have a high level of interpersonal trust. Consider the RWA's

unwavering acceptance of authority combined with distrust (e.g., prejudice) of other races. Thus, the meaning of “trust” depends on the context of the science in which it is presented.

One of the most influential studies on the relationship between confidence in the judicial system and DPS was done by Messner, Baumer, and Rosenfeld (2006). They studied the GSS responses between 1980 and 2002 and measured citizen confidence in all three branches of the government and support for the DP to determine if DPS effects were moderated in states that had high vigilante historical context (had significant histories of lynching). They found there was a link between attitudes about the DP and American vigilantism in that the DP “facilitates the embrace of harsh forms of punishment as a communal ritual in the service of victims” (p. 582), and this tended to be higher among white Americans, as they had low interpersonal trust and high anti-black prejudice ( $P \leq .05$ ). Government distrust was statistically significant for both whites and black; however, whites who distrusted the government were more likely to support the DP, and blacks who distrusted the government were less likely to support the DP. Although they found that government distrust was not moderated by regional factors, they saw an increase in the *overall* likelihood of DPS in whites of states with high vigilante historical context, which increased proportionally to DPS as it was influenced by other predictors (i.e., sex, income, education, racism, and religiosity).

This is important because it implies that there may be a racial component that factors in to distrust in the government. To southern whites, distrusting the government may stem from the skepticism that murderers who serve life without parole may not have to serve their whole sentences and are often privy to amenities such as free healthcare and

recreational activities (Messner, Baumer, & Rosenfeld, 2006). Supporting capital punishment, therefore, may give white individuals a sense of power while reducing the discretion of potentially lenient government officials. On the other hand, blacks who were distrustful of the government were significantly less likely to have high DPS, as they did not wish to give more power to an institution that they did not trust, especially when the price was death. Ultimately, the takeaway was that confidence in the government had a significant influence on DPS for both whites and blacks. In order to discern the reasons behind this phenomenon, more research should be conducted to isolate the variables that are modulating these effects.

### **Corporal Punishment**

Altemeyer's (2006) research on RWAs found that they also strongly supported keeping with traditional social customs that had been deemed acceptable. For example, strong RWAs would still likely support the usage of spanking as a traditional form of child discipline. High RWAs are also more likely to support corporal punishment, especially if it involved a child breaking the law, due to their tendency to conform to conventional customs, a propensity for authoritarian aggression, and an unwavering support of established authorities.

There was strong evidence to support the claim that people who were likely to use or favor corporal punishment on children were also likely to support the practice of capital punishment (for adults). Altemeyer's (2006) research posits that people who scored high on his RWA test (authoritarian followers) shared three distinct traits to a high degree: submission to an established, legitimate authority of the society, aggression in agreement with the goals or ideals of the authorities, and

conformity to conventional norms and customs (p. 9). Thus, people who were high RWAs tended to support capital punishment as well as corporal punishment, as they share the classification of “socially sanctioned violence,” as studied by Anderson and Bushman (2002, p. 127). Benjamin’s (2006) research using the Attitudes Toward Violence Scale and the RWA Scale found a strong positive association between authoritarianism and attitudes toward “war ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ), penal code violence ( $r = .26, p = .002$ ), and corporal punishment ( $r = .33, p < .001$ )” (p. 925), as well.

Other research, such as that done by Anderson et al. (2006) and Straus (2001) showed that there is a culture of violence that feeds into our system of punishment that legitimizes the use of physical punitive measures. Anderson et al. found that respondents’ support for violence was positively correlated with being physically violent, and that attitudes about war, corporal punishment, and penal code violence were highly related, and all categorized as “socially sanctioned violence” (p. 127). War, corporal punishment, and capital punishment are all ways in which humans, by way of governmental or social institutions, dehumanize others by denying them basic rights (i.e., the right to life or right not to be harmed) for the sake of safety, order, and compliance. Since sanctioning all three of this type of socially-tolerated violence is a rarity among the majority of nations in the Western hemisphere, I expect that this research is only narrowly generalizable, in that it is only relevant among the countries which have not yet abolished capital punishment (i.e., the United States).

Straus’ theoretical approach known as Cultural Spillover Theory, stated that “violence in one sphere of life tends to engender violence in another sphere” (p. 137). Anderson et al.’s “socially sanctioned violence,”

(p. 127) was derived from Anderson and Bushman's (2002) research that upstanding people in society were able to sanction extremely violent and terrible acts like murder and torture if they could morally justify their actions. Supporters of corporal punishment may apply a similar logic towards the spanking of children. The compelling totality of research done by Anderson et al. (2006), Straus (2001), and Bushman (2002) can be summed up as follows: cultural approval of corporal punishment and the socialization of violence was cyclically carried forth from one sphere of life (i.e., domestic life) to another (i.e., civilian life), and it was evidenced in the continued acceptance of capital punishment as an acceptable method for solving problems.

### **Theory and Hypotheses:**

This study analyzed the effects of individuals' fear of crime, confidence in the judicial system, and support of corporal punishment on support of capital punishment. Conventional wisdom suggested that fear of crime was positively associated with increased DPS, but the relevant literature supporting this relationship has been inconsistent. When isolating the specific variables of the population and analyzing the effects, (i.e., age, prejudice, and education), I expected to see older people being more fearful of crime, which would in turn increase DPS. I also suspected that increased anti-black prejudice was associated with high fear of crime, thus increasing DPS. In theory, people who were prejudiced against black individuals primarily attributed "criminal activity" to blacks. I also predicted that education played a role in the relationship between fear of crime and DPS, with fear being mediated by high levels of education. For confidence in the judicial-system versus DPS, I suspected that this association would also be positive as long as whites and blacks were considered separately, as

the literature suggests confidence in the judicial system is heavily influenced by race, albeit for very distinct reasons.

I also considered political ideology to be a mediating factor, as the literature had suggested that conservatives were more likely to advocate for harsher sentences. Lastly, I was expecting that support for corporal punishment, authoritarianism, and fundamentalism were positively associated with DPS. Further, I hypothesized that supporters of corporal punishment would be more likely to support the DP, in that people who can rationalize the use of socially sanctioned violence on children will also use that reasoning to support capital punishment. I also measured authoritarianism and fundamentalism as interacting variables, since these, in part, constituted the foundation of personal core beliefs that could positively impact DPS, as suggested in the literature. Figure 1 depicts the predicted model for all of the variables (independent and covariates) as they work on each other to ultimately impact DPS. Table 1 outlines the hypotheses of this study.

### **Methods and Operationalization:**

This study used the GSS, an annual social survey that has been administered since 1972. This research is limited by the years that certain variables are available (1998 and 2008). Each variable in this study has been operationalized using one GSS question each. Fear of crime, confidence in the courts and legal system, and support for corporal punishment were the independent variables.

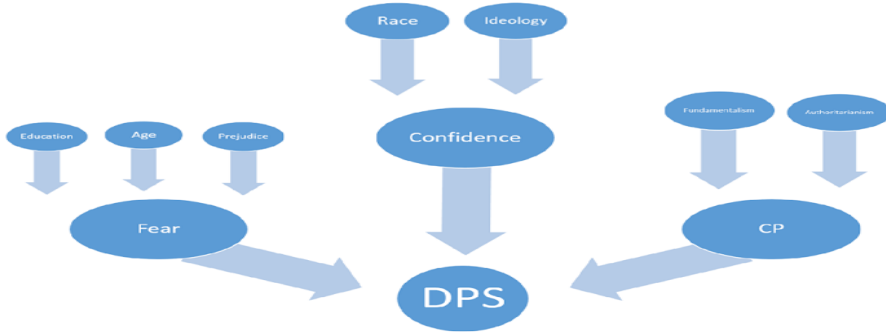


Figure 1: Model of covariates mediating each independent variable. Low education and high prejudice mediate fear as it impacts DPS. Being white and conservative mediate the relationship between confidence and DPS. Authoritarianism and fundamentalism work on CP support, which acts on DPS.

Fear of crime has been conceptualized as a person, due to past history of victimization, perceptions of crime in his area, being elderly, or something else, who expresses a high level of concern for personal safety, property damage, or theft. This variable, FEAR, was operationalized using the question, “Is there any area right around here--that is, within a mile--where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?” and coded as 1 = no and 2 = yes.

Confidence in the judicial system was conceptualized intuitively and operationalized as, CONCOURT, “How much confidence do you have in Courts and the legal system [?]”. Answers ranged from “no confidence at all,” “very little confidence,” “some confidence,” “a great deal of confidence,” and “complete confidence” and were coded 1-5, respectively.

Support for corporal punishment was conceptualized as favoring physical punishment in the form of spanking or hitting for non-injurious behavioral correction on children. It was operationalized using the question, SPANKING, “Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly



disagree that it is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking?” Responses were coded as “strongly disagree” = 1, “disagree” = 2, “agree” = 3, and “strongly agree” = 4

Table 1: Hypotheses as Mediated by Intervening Variables	
<p><b>H<sub>A1</sub>: As fear of crime increases, DPS increases.</b></p> <p>H<sub>A2</sub>: Among older people, fear and DPS is positively associated.</p> <p>H<sub>A3</sub>: Among highly educated people, fear and DPS is negatively associated</p> <p>H<sub>A4</sub>: Among racially prejudiced people, fear and DPS is positively associated.</p>	<p><b>H<sub>O1</sub>: As fear of crime increases, DPS does not increase.</b></p> <p>H<sub>O2</sub>: Among older people, fear and DPS is not positively associated.</p> <p>H<sub>O3</sub>: Among highly educated people, fear and DPS is not negatively associated.</p> <p>H<sub>O4</sub>: Among racially prejudiced people, fear and DPS is not positively associated.</p>
<p><b>H<sub>A5</sub>: As confidence in the courts and legal system increases, DPS increases.</b></p> <p>H<sub>A6</sub>: Among whites, confidence and DPS is positively associated.</p> <p>H<sub>A7</sub>: Among conservatives, confidence and DPS is positively associated.</p>	<p><b>H<sub>O5</sub>: As confidence increases, DPS does not increase.</b></p> <p>H<sub>O6</sub>: Among whites, confidence and DPS is not positively associated.</p> <p>H<sub>O7</sub>: Among conservatives, confidence and DPS is not positively associated.</p>
<p><b>H<sub>A8</sub>: As support for corporal punishment increases, DPS increases.</b></p> <p><b>H<sub>A9</sub>: As authoritarianism increases, DPS increases.</b></p> <p><b>H<sub>A10</sub>: As religious fundamentalism increases, DPS increases.</b></p> <p>H<sub>A11</sub>: Among authoritarians, CP and DPS is positively associated.</p> <p>H<sub>A12</sub>: Among religious fundamentalists, CP and DPS is positively associated.</p>	<p><b>H<sub>O8</sub>: As CP support increases, DPS does not increase.</b></p> <p><b>H<sub>O9</sub>: As authoritarianism increases, DPS does not increase.</b></p> <p><b>H<sub>O10</sub>: As fundamentalism increases, DPS does not increase.</b></p> <p>H<sub>O11</sub>: Among authoritarians, CP and DPS is not positively associated.</p> <p>H<sub>O12</sub>: Among religious fundamentalists, CP and DPS is not positively associated.</p>

The dependent variable, support for capital punishment was conceptualized as believing that government execution of murders should be allowed, and it was operationalized as, CAPPUN, "Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?" Responses were coded as "oppose" = 1 and "favor" = 2. A better question for this variable could have asked respondents to indicate strong or mild agreement or disagreement with the use of capital punishment for murder; however, the GSS does not have questions about capital punishment support using this framework, so the coding of the variable has been left in its original form.

The effects of each independent variable were analyzed using a chi-square test. Considering that past research has found certain demographic characteristics to significantly impact on the dependent variable, this study used controlled for other variables. This study first considered the effects of each variable (independent variables and covariates) on the dependent variable in a chi square test (see Figure 1). From there, each of the independent variables was tested against the dependent variable using all of the covariates. The covariates of this study were race, religious fundamentalism, political ideology, age, level of education, authoritarianism, and anti-black prejudice.

Race was conceptualized as white or black, respectively; religious fundamentalism as liberal, moderate, or fundamentalist; political ideology as liberal, moderate, or conservative; age as young, middle-aged, older-aged, and elderly; level of education as highest level last completed; authoritarianism as exemplifying Altemeyer's (1981; 2006) classifications of a RWA by favoring socially sanctioned violence (i.e., spanking so that that

children would obey their authorities); and anti-black prejudice as individual perceptions of blacks' intelligence as a group.

Race was operationalized using the question, RACE, "What race do you consider yourself?" and coded as black = 1 or white = 2. This study was only interested in the potential split of racial prejudice and attitudes as it deals with the historically antagonistic groups of whites and blacks that may have effects on their DPS; thus people reporting as "other" had been omitted. Religious fundamentalism was operationalized using the GSS question, FUND, which asked respondents several questions to assess individuals' level of religious fundamentalism. It was coded as "liberal" = 1, "moderate" = 2, and "fundamentalist" = 3. Political ideology was assessed using the question, POLVIEWS, "I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal--point 1--to extremely conservative--point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?" and re-coded with "Extremely [sic] conservative," "Conservative," and "Slightly [sic] conservative" represented as "conservative" = 3, "Moderate" = 2, and "Extremely liberal," "Liberal," and "Slightly Liberal" as "liberal" = 1. Age was operationalized from raw numbers corresponding to the respondent's recorded age into the following categories and codes: 1 as "young" for 44 years or less, 2 as "middle-aged" for 45 years to 64 years, 3 as "older-aged" for 65 years to 74 years, and 4 as "elderly" for 75 years and older. Level of education was operationalized using the set questions, collectively termed, EDUC, which asked respondents to answer whether they received a high school diploma (or the highest level completed) or college degree (or highest level completed) and were recorded as 0 – 20, with 12 representing graduating high school, 16 as graduating undergraduate college, and 20 as graduating

graduate or higher education levels. The responses were recoded with the grades 17-20 representing “highly educated” = 1, grades 13-16 representing “medium educated” = 2, and grades 0-12 representing “poorly educated” = 3. Authoritarianism, OBEY, was measured using a question which asks respondents to rank how important it was that a child should learn “to obey” “to prepare him or her for life” along with several other variables. This question had been recoded such that respondents reported that children should obey as “most important” as 4, “2<sup>nd</sup> important” as 3, “3<sup>rd</sup> important” as 2, and all lower rankings as 1. This study was interested in analyzing the respondents who answered 3 and 4 as strong indicators of parental authoritarianism and 1 and 2 as weaker indicators. Lastly, anti-black prejudice was operationalized using the question, “Do people [who are black] tend to be unintelligent or tend to be intelligent?” on a scale from 1 – 7, with 7 being “unintelligent”. The responses were recoded to represent 1 and 2 being “not prejudiced,” 3-5 being “average,” and 6-7 being “prejudiced.” These answers were coded this way because people who ranked all black people as a 7 (unintelligent) would likely not differ much in terms of their level of anti-black prejudice with people who ranked blacks as a 6. The same applies for the opposite side of the scale, 1 or 2. Additionally, the responses of 3 to 5 were mid-range selections, which probably did not have significant differences among individuals who had certain levels of anti-black prejudice. In other words, this study operationalized anti-black prejudice by coding individuals as 1 for not being prejudiced against blacks, 2 as having low to average levels of prejudice against blacks, and 2 as being highly prejudiced against blacks. This scheme of recoding the variables was done in order to allow

interpretation of the results as intuitive as possible (e.g., increasing levels of authoritarianism corresponding to higher number codes).

### **Results:**

This study had 4855 cases for the cross tabulation between DPS and each of the three independent variables; fear of crime, support for corporal punishment, and confidence in the courts and legal system. Each independent variable was analyzed using a cross tabulation with the dependent variable and tested for significance using chi square as well as association via gamma. See Table 2.

#### **Fear of Crime**

There were 2,964 valid cases using fear and DPS as variables. Based on these specific conceptualizations, the majority of people did not have a fear of crime (62.2%), while 37.8 percent of people did. Of those who feared crime, 68 percent favored the DP and 32 percent were opposed. Of those who favored the DP, 36.6% were fearful, while 63.7 percent were not. These results were weakly associated in the negative direction ( $P \leq .009$ ,  $\gamma = -.108$ ), in that as fear of crime increases, DPS decreases.  $H_{01}$  failed to be rejected.

This study went deeper into analyzing several other covariates or interacting variables that could explain these findings. Fear of crime was analyzed using age, anti-black prejudice, and level of education as the primary controls also using the chi square test of significance and the gamma test of association. The interaction between fear and age does not have a statistically significant impact on DPS; therefore,  $H_{02}$  failed to be rejected.

Table 2: Variable Interactions on DPS			
Variable Interactions	Chi Square Value	Chi Square Significance	Gamma Value
<b>Fear*DPS</b>	6.872	.009**	-.108
[Fear*Age]*DPS	3.254	.354	-.066
[Fear*Education]*DPS	8.232	.016*	-.111
[Fear*Prejudice]*DPS	7.164	.306	-.115
<b>Confidence*DPS</b>	3.615	.461	.025
[Confidence*Race]*DPS	71.846	.000***	.240
[Confidence*Ideology]*DPS	120.975	.000***	.197
<b>CP*DPS</b>	65.751	.000***	.225
<b>Authoritarianism*DPS</b>	8.563	.036*	.087
<b>Fundamentalism*DPS</b>	2.108	.348	.040
[CP*Authoritarianism]*DPS	22.691	.007**	.165
[CP*Fundamentalism]*DPS	28.214	.000***	.128

\* $P \leq .05$ , \*\* $P \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $P \leq .001$

*Note.* Of the main independent variables, only fear of crime, support for corporal punishment, and authoritarianism were statistically significant in their relationships with DPS. Fear was weak and negatively associated with DPS, and CP support and authoritarianism were positively associated with DPS to a moderate and weak degree, respectively. The single strongest association was found to be between the interaction variables of confidence and race on DPS.

There were 2,949 valid cases available to analyze the interaction between fear, DPS, and education level. Among all levels of education, the percentage of people who favored the death penalty was 70 percent  $\pm 1$ . Fear was highest among people with medium education (38.9%) as opposed to poor education (37%) and high education (37.1%). Education level interacting with fear was found to have a weak, negative effect on

DPS ( $P \leq .016$ ,  $\gamma = -.111$ ). Thus I rejected the  $H_{03}$ . The variables of anti-black prejudice interacting with fear were found to have a statistically insignificant effect on DPS; thus I failed to reject the  $H_{04}$ .

### **Confidence in the Courts and Legal System**

Confidence was found to be statistically insignificant on DPS; thus  $H_{05}$  failed to be rejected. The interaction variables that were tested on the relationship between confidence and DPS were race and political ideology. There were 2,202 valid cases for the interaction of confidence, DPS, and race. Among those who favored the DP, whites were more likely to have no confidence (5.3%) and little confidence (16.3%) in the judicial system than blacks (4.5% and 11.9%). However, when considering all people, regardless of their position on the DP, blacks were more likely to have no confidence (10.3%) or little confidence (24.8%) than whites (6.9% and 20.7%). Whites who favored the DP were more likely to have some confidence in the judicial system (36.9%) than blacks who favored it (19.7%). Race interacting with confidence was found to have a moderately positive effect on DPS ( $P \leq .001$ ,  $\gamma = .240$ ), in that as the combined interaction of race and confidence increased (i.e., as respondents reported being white and having high confidence in the judicial system), support for the death penalty increased. Thus I rejected the  $H_{06}$ .

There were 2312 valid cases for analyzing the interaction between political ideologies, confidence, and DPS. Among those who favored the DP, a higher percentage of conservatives reported some confidence in the judicial system (38.5%) than either liberals (25.3%) or moderates (36.9%). Among the DP supporters, moderates were more likely to have no confidence (6.1%) than liberals (3.7%) or conservatives (5%), and conservatives were more likely to have less confidence (15.6%) than

liberals (13.7%) or moderates (15%). Political ideology interacting with confidence was found to have a weakly positive effect on DPS ( $P \leq .001$ ,  $\gamma = .197$ ), in that as the combined interaction of political ideology and confidence increased (i.e., as respondents reported being more conservative and having high confidence in the judicial system), support for the death penalty increased. Thus I rejected the  $H_{07}$ .

### **Corporal Punishment Support, Authoritarianism, and Fundamentalism**

There were 2,932 valid cases using support for corporal punishment and DSP as variables. More people agreed (47.7%) or strongly agreed (26.6%) with the use of corporal punishment than disagreed (19.2%) or strongly disagreed (6.5%). Of those who agreed or strongly agreed, 74.7 percent and 79.3 percent favored capital punishment, respectively. The highest percentages of people out of the total belonging to any combination of groups were favoring the DP and agreeing with CP (35.6%), followed by favoring the DP and strongly agreeing with CP (21.1%). The relationship between CP and DPS was moderate and positive ( $P \leq .001$ ,  $\gamma = .225$ ), in that as support for corporal punishment increases, DPS increases; therefore,  $H_{08}$  was rejected.

This study also looked at authoritarianism and fundamentalism as it affects DPS to determine whether one variable is better at explaining DPS over the others. There were 3007 valid cases available to test the effects of authoritarianism on DPS. A higher percentage of respondents who favored the DP were not authoritarian (52.5%), whereas the percentage of those who were either highly or slightly authoritarian totaled 29.8. Of all groups, the highest percentage of respondents were those who were not authoritarian and favored the DP (36.5%), followed by those who were not authoritarian who opposed the DP (17%). The relationship between



authoritarianism and DPS was in the expected direction; as authoritarianism increased, so did DPS. Therefore,  $H_{09}$  was rejected. However, the association level was weaker than that of CP ( $P \leq .036$ ,  $\gamma = .087$ ). This setup was replicated for fundamentalism, but the results were statistically insignificant; thus  $H_{010}$  failed to be rejected.

After determining that CP support was the best variable to analyze DPS, two interaction variables were tested on DPS, namely CP interacting with authoritarianism, and CP interacting with religious fundamentalism. There were 1,487 valid cases available for analyzing the interaction between support for corporal punishment and authoritarianism together on DPS. Among those who ranked highest for support of CP, the percentage of people favoring the DP increased as authoritarianism increased (from 16%, 19.3%, 19.7%, and 23.8%). Among those who ranked highest for authoritarianism and favored the DP, a higher percentage of people agreed with CP (52.9%) or strongly agreed (32.2%) as opposed to disagreeing (13.5%) or strongly disagreeing (1.4%). Most people agreed with CP (50.4%), and of those people, 37 percent favored the DP. The percentage of people favoring the DP was highest among people who scored the highest for authoritarianism (74%) as compared to the others (in order from most to least: 70.7%, 71.8%, and 69%). Authoritarianism interacting with support for corporal punishment was found to have a weak, positive effect on DPS ( $P \leq .007$ ,  $\gamma = .165$ ), in that as the combined interaction of authoritarianism and CP support increased, support for the death penalty increased; thus,  $H_{011}$  was rejected.

There were 2,776 valid cases available for analyzing the interaction between support for corporal punishment and religious fundamentalism on DPS. Among those who strongly agreed with CP usage, the percentage of

people who favored the DP increased as fundamentalism increased (in order from liberal to fundamentalist: 16.1%, 18%, and 24.2%). Among all fundamentalists, the greatest percentages belonged to people who both supported the DP and agreed with CP (36.1%), followed by people who supported both the DP and strongly agreed with CP (24.2%). Religious fundamentalism interacting with CP support was found to have a weak, positive effect on DPS ( $P \leq .001$ ,  $\gamma = .128$ ), in that as the combined interaction of fundamentalism and CP support increased, support for the death penalty increased. Thus I rejected the  $H_{012}$ .

### **Discussion:**

Of all of the tests that were run, the null hypotheses for tests 1, 2, 4, 5, and 10 failed to be rejected and failed to provide support for my alternative hypotheses. However, for the remaining tests, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12, I rejected the null hypotheses. These tests indicated support for the following relationships. As the interaction of fear and education increased, there was a negative effect on DPS, showing that people who were more educated and fearful of crime supported the DP less. In other words, the level of education that a person had had an impact on his support for the DP, even if he was fearful of crime. This was more evidence in support of the claim that education can trump the most primal human emotions.

Taking the interaction of increased confidence in the judicial system and being white resulted in a net positive support for the DP. Additionally, the interaction between political conservatism and increased confidence in the judicial system resulted in a net positive DPS as well. These findings were interesting because they were extremely statistically significant associations, even though the basic association for confidence on DPS was insignificant. It shows that confidence alone did not provide

adequate information with which to make judgments or conclusions about people's DPS, but considering race or ideology with confidence did. Knowing a person's race was the most powerful indicator of DPS, as it strengthened the association to a moderate level. Knowing a person's ideology was also important-- it aided the analysis albeit to a slightly weaker degree.

Fundamentalism and DPS were statistically insignificant but support for CP and authoritarianism were statistically significant. Support for DP had a moderate positive association with DPS, and authoritarianism was weakly positive in association. I concluded that CP support would be better to analyze DPS among GSS respondents. The last two tests were both highly significant, but they resulted in weaker associations with DPS. The interaction of fundamentalism and CP support had a positive effect on DPS, but to a lesser degree than just CP support and DPS. Likewise, the interaction of authoritarianism and CP support had an even weaker positive effect on DPS than the other two tests. This suggests that among these last tests, CP support, when taken alone, was the best indicator of DPS so far.

In conclusion, the best measured indicators for predicting DPS include the combined score of a person's confidence in the justice system and race, followed by one's support for corporal punishment. Researchers still do not fully know everything that impacts a person's decision to support the DP. More research is needed to analyze other potential factors that may play a role in a DPS.

Additionally, this research could be improved by analyzing DPS on an ordinal scale rather than dichotomously in order to fully capture the wider public sentiment. It is a huge limitation of this study to use the main

dependent variable, DPS, from the GSS, as it does not allow respondents to report degrees of support or opposition. Several other variables that were included in this study are also dichotomous, possibly contributing to some hypotheses being rejected when in actuality there might be evidence in support of them. For example, race was only analyzed as respondents fell into the categories of white and black. Other minorities were excluded from the sample, thus the full extent of my main research question as well as any minor research questions such as racial discrimination on DPS did not apply to a potentially significant portion of Americans. My research can be improved by including better, more comprehensive responses for certain variables that were dichotomous in this study such as “strongly” or “slightly” supporting the DP or demarcating race into detailed categories such as “Asian American” or “Pacific Islander” rather than lumped together into the “Other” category.

Ultimately this research is valuable because it provides insight into the patterns that help us predict who is a likely supporter of the DP. One of the goals of this research is that the results can be applied to real-world solutions to reduce support for the DP. Some of the traits that were analyzed to determine DPS form the foundational personalities of Americans and therefore cannot be influenced in a cost-effective or timely manner. For instance, staunch believers in corporal punishment are not easy targets of anti-corporal punishment programs, as it permeates throughout their religious and cultural backgrounds.. However, even though the majority of people favor the DP, I suggest that there may be hope for reducing DP support through increased education aimed at first reducing public fear of crime, since there is evidence to show that education is negatively correlated with DPS.

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## **Maximizing Worker Productivity Through Transportation**

Presented at VCU's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Political Science Student Research

Conference by Featured Outside Scholar:

Jeff Martindale, *Towson University*

Which form of transportation is the most expedient and affordable for spatially mismatched workers in both urban centers and less populated areas? Some argue that alternative automotive transit programs are burdensome and impede the efficiency and effectiveness of roadways, and that walking and bicycling are most financially practical and socially considerate for individuals travelling long distances to and from work (TA, "Your Advocate"). While public transportation and ride-sharing services may be less physically arduous on travelers, the financial and environmental penalties consistent with these services often reduce their usefulness over long periods of time. Others assert that redistributing a percentage of a local or state government's road pricing revenues, which are attained through commuter charges, gas taxes, and other vehicle related costs, to citizens will prove most effective. By reallocating road pricing revenues to citizens, individuals will gain additional monetary means and incentives to drive to and from work (Rouhani et al. 2015). Although both of these arguments explain methods that could increase spatially mismatched employees' use of transportation alternatives, I argue that government subsidies of private sector transportation services such as Uber, which call on non-employed citizens to provide transportation services, could potentially increase workers' accessibility to quick and affordable transportation options. Specifically, by subsidizing citizen-run

transportation services, more individuals gain the ability to afford these transportation alternatives.

This is an important area of research due to the impact that inadequate public transportation and expensive private transportation services have on spatially mismatched individuals. If citizens do not have access to public transportation options or do not have the financial liberty to consistently pay for privately operated transportation services, these citizens are forced to walk or use other inefficient transportation methods to travel long distances. The subsidization of citizen-run transportation systems such as Uber would vastly reduce commutes for many citizens. This reduced travel time would allow individuals to access additional means by which to improve their social and economic conditions. For example, a shortened commute time would give individuals the opportunity to study educational material, pursue additional economic avenues, and engage in healthy lifestyle choices; these opportunities could potentially contribute to an increased quality of life.

In addition, transportation improvements have the potential to decrease the physical and psychological strains typically placed on commuters, and in turn increase commuters' productivity and efficiency at work. In order to promote community growth and prosperity, it is important for businesses, local leaders, and politicians to better understand potential alternatives to the established transportation methods available.

### **Literature Review**

Initial advocates of public transport systems believed that an expanded public transport system would serve two purposes: to decrease traffic, vehicular collisions, and environmental detriments; and to increase



both the availability of affordable transportation and the productivity of public transportation riders (APTA, “Public Transportation Benefits”; Mickey 2013). While many governmental bodies support public transit improvements, some scholars argue that different government transportation protocols should be used in order to generate maximum benefits for spatially mismatched workers. Specifically, Geddes and Nentchev (2013) argue that by charging commuters for using public roads, especially during busier hours of the day, governments gain access to increased funds for transit purposes. These funds, according to Geddes and Nentchev, could then be redistributed to local residents for transportation assistance.

While both of these arguments are logical, it is my hypothesis that increasing the number of government subsidies to transportation services such as Uber will yield significant socioeconomic benefits for workers and their communities. Generally, as more workers attain higher financial capabilities, their communities also achieve greater economic success. Also, as Shu-Hen Chiang expresses in “The Dilemma of ‘Twin Cities’: Is the Suburban Dependence Hypothesis Applicable?,” “people follow jobs,” which means that stable economic conditions are required for individuals and communities’ continued wellbeing. People will relocate if there are more advantageous job offerings in different areas (150), which makes accessibility a significant issue for local governments and employers. However, in areas with lower populations and fewer financial resources, drastically increasing the quantity or efficiency of public transportation services is less feasible. As such, building upon established transportation options that span large distances, such as Uber, potentially allows smaller

urban governments to provide the transportation services necessary to maintain a sustainable workforce.

### **Methodology**

This paper will attempt to portray a causal relationship between subsidization of citizen-run transportation services and increased worker productivity. In addition to examining the aforementioned arguments, I will investigate previous attempts to subsidize privately owned transportation services and the benefits for workers such subsidies yielded. Then, I will analyze the methods utilized by citizen-operated transportation services and explore the likelihood that previous similar government subsidies yielded equitable or additional benefit for workers and local economies in areas without adequate public transportation.

### **Data and Analysis**

There are inherent benefits to public transportation systems in the United States' economic, energy, and environmental realms, and the amount of Americans utilizing relatively inexpensive public transportation options rose significantly over the twenty-first century. In 2014 alone, United States citizens took roughly eleven billion trips on various modes of public transportation, which provided substantial health and environmental benefits to riders and all American citizens (APTA, "Public Transportation Benefits"). According to the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention, motor vehicle traffic accidents account for approximately thirty thousand to forty thousand deaths annually (CDC, "Accidents or Unintentional Injuries"); yet the inclusion of public transportation in metropolitan areas significantly reduces the number of cars on roads, thus reducing the potential for fatal motor vehicle accidents. Though the threat of vehicular accidents is not eradicated through the use

of public transportation, public transit services also offer riders access to much larger, generally safer vehicles that are less likely to be damaged during collisions (APTA, “Public Transportation Benefits”; Mickey 2013).

In addition, public transit services reduce physical and financial stresses for riders. Public transportation is prompt, timely, and allows riders to travel to and from their destinations without weather constraints or other hindrances. Driving a personal vehicle in an urban center significantly increases the amount of gasoline needed to travel from place to place. By offering relatively inexpensive and financially consistent fares to riders, public transportation services allow riders to better save and manage money (APTA, “Public Transportation Benefits”). By reducing the stresses that are usually associated with personal transportation, users of public transportation services attain access to opportunities to increase their quality of life.

While the aforementioned benefits portray public transportation services’ positive effect on riders, the economic benefits for local communities, businesses, and the environment are also immense. According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), investment in public transportation yields financial prosperity for both investors and local residents. For example, the APTA asserts that “every \$1 invested in public transportation generates approximately \$4 in economic returns... every \$1 billion invested in public transportation supports and creates more than 50,000 jobs... [and] every \$10 million in capital investment in public transportation yields \$30 million in increased business sales.” Additionally, property values rose by an average of forty-two percent for properties located near frequently used public transportation hubs (APTA, “Public Transportation Benefits”). It is arguable that the

correlation between increased capital investment in public transportation and improved business sales is a result of the rise in worker productivity due to access to more adequate forms of transportation. Should more expedient and reliable transit services become available to spatially mismatched employees, workers' abilities to consistently reach their workplace, without fear of travel obstacles, substantially increase.

From an environmental standpoint, public transit significantly reduces the detrimental effects of mass personal transportation. The APTA claims that households with personal vehicles "near public transit drive an average of 4,400 fewer miles than households with no access to public transit" and "public transportation use in the United States saves 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline annually" (APTA, "Public Transportation Benefits"). Additionally, for each commuter, switching from personal transportation to public transit reduces a household's carbon emissions by ten to thirty percent annually. In the United States, public transportation reduces annual countrywide carbon emissions by thirty-seven million metric tons, which is "equivalent to Washington, DC; New York City; Atlanta; Denver; and Los Angeles combined [ceasing to use] electricity" (APTA, "Public Transportation Benefits"). As such, public transportation services certainly assist the United States in meeting the standards necessary to address the global detriments of global warming.

However, while public transit allow community residents to travel to jobs that are of significant distance from their homes, this does not necessarily mean that public transportation is a quicker option for commuters. According to a community survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau in 2009, the average travel time to work for public transit riders was over twenty-five minutes (McKenzie and Rapino 2011).

This survey shows that while public transit can expedite travel to and from work for community residents, a significant amount of time is still required for workers to reach their jobs. As such, it is arguable that public transit allows workers to take jobs in areas that are further away from their homes, but public transit remains insufficient in assisting workers reach their workplaces if they are already spatially mismatched from their jobs prior to utilizing public transportation services.

Furthermore, the most expansive public transportation services are offered predominantly in heavily populated metropolitan areas. The issue of spatial mismatches transcends urban centers, as workers across the United States in less densely populated areas also find themselves struggling to quickly and inexpensively travel to and from work. For workers in less urban areas of the country, public transit is either too scarce, inefficient, or expensive to be a beneficial solution to the issue of spatial mismatches for residents and workers that wish to improve their own socioeconomic conditions or achieve additional socioeconomic gains for their communities (White 2015).

In addition to public transit systems' inability to adequately expedite the rate at which workers can travel to and from work, public transportation services generally cost more to governments than these services produce in revenue. For example, by early 2015, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) held a debt of approximately nine billion dollars and required an additional three billion dollars for public transit system maintenance (Vennoch 2015). Despite the MBTA's nearly twelve billion dollar requirement, Bostonians continued to advocate for increased access to public transportation services. One large Boston-based corporation—New Balance—also desired to build transit

systems outside of the established routes so that the corporation could “expand its headquarters and build retail, a hotel, a track, and [a] skating rink in one Boston neighborhood not served by public transit” (Semuels 2015). Due to the MBTA’s budgetary limitations, coupled with New Balance’s need to expand its infrastructure and public accessibility, the corporation decided to build the public transit extension itself. New Balance allocated roughly sixteen million dollars to the project and offered to pay for maintenance to the system’s extension for at least ten years after establishment (Semuels 2015). By working with the MBTA, New Balance created public transportation access that benefitted the city and the corporation, and created work opportunities for many city residents.

While New Balance’s plan potentially improves the public transportation system in Boston for workers and local businesses, and some scholars argue that “more public-private partnership[s] may be [the] solution” to the problem “of growing economic disparities” between workers using public transit (White 2015; Semuels 2015), similar projects by other corporations are unlikely in the future. Since public transit services are generally not overwhelmingly profitable for any single business entity, large for-profit corporations may not see the business advantages in assisting local transportation authorities. Additionally, public-private partnerships such as the MBTA-New Balance collaboration are less likely in areas outside urban centers. Businesses are unlikely to assist smaller governments or agencies in improving public transit systems if the businesses themselves do not directly achieve some form of financial benefit from the transportation improvement.

Because established public transportation services in the United States are inadequate for spatially mismatched workers, and public-private

partnerships in public transit systems are ~~or~~ unfeasible for numerous businesses, governments must pursue different policies to assist local residents travel to and from work and other locations, especially in less populated areas. As discussed, travelers' reliance on fossil fuels is declining through increased use of public transit systems and the production and purchase of more fuel-efficient vehicles. Due to these transportation changes, as well as general currency inflation, governments' purchasing power—the amount of a good that an entity with a set dollar quantity can buy—from fuel taxes is continuously decreasing. In order to address this revenue decline, scholars such as Geddes and Nentchev advocate for a different form of public-private partnership regarding transportation—road pricing (2013, 1).

Road pricing consists of several different charge options including mileage-based user fees (MBOFs) for those using public roads. Geddes and Nentchev argue that the increased funds from MBOFs can be redistributed as “an annual dividend payment to all households within the newly priced region” (2013, 1). By charging all public roadway users, local residents attain access to funds that can be used for maintaining or establishing sustainable transportation options, whether they be public or private transit opportunities. Furthermore, by charging citizens to use public roadways, local residents' stake in protecting and policing MBOF regions increase as well. Recognizing that they will gain greater funds with increased commuter use, local residents will work harder to ensure that the MBOF roads are accessible and appealing to commuters through advocacy of road use and safeguarding the MBOF areas from crime and other safety issues. The road pricing system creates an environment in which the citizens are themselves the owners of local roads, rather than

the simple, passive payers of transportation infrastructure through taxes. By providing an incentive for local residents to promote adequate transportation for commuters, travel becomes less arduous on MBUF roads and communities around MBUF areas become safer and better policed (Geddes and Nentchev 2013, 1-4).

MBUFs can also be altered based on the time of day so that travelers utilizing the MBUF roads pay greater fees during high-traffic periods. As such, commuters are incentivized to either find different routes or travel at different times of day. Either way, it is arguable that MBUFs decrease traffic congestion and expedite the rate at which commuters travel to and from work (Geddes and Nentchev 2013, 3-4). For workers without adequate transportation, and all commuters, reducing road congestion potentially yields the opportunity for quicker travel time to and from work or other locations through transportation services. Additionally, if local workers without adequate transportation receive funds from MBUFs, it is arguable that these citizens will gain the ability to individually or collectively purchase private transportation vehicles that were previously inaccessible. Therefore, the road pricing system offers opportunities to increase the ability of spatial mismatched workers to quickly and consistently reach their workplaces with reliable transportation options.

However, depending on the population size or density of an MBUF road's jurisdiction, the funds that each local resident receives through MBUFs may be small. If MBUFs are used on roads within urban centers, the reallocation of MBUF funds to citizens may be slim, even if the MBUF roadways generate substantial amounts of revenue. As such, it is arguable that these funds, even if pooled together, would be insufficient for local



residents to greatly improve or establish private transportation options. For largely populated areas, the only realistic benefit of road pricing systems is the potential for greater community policing and social investment in MBUF regions. While greater social interactions and collective protection are certainly desirable and advantageous goals for communities of all sizes, little can be done to improve spatially mismatched workers' access to adequate transportation options through these endeavors.

Conversely, in less densely populated areas, the share of MBUF funds per citizen would be greater and potentially present more realistic opportunities for citizens to gain access to private transportation. Yet a different issue is likely to occur from the use of MBUFs in less populated areas commuters may completely bypass MBUF regions. If several roads utilize MBUFs in urban centers, it becomes difficult for commuters to fully avoid paying for road access. However, commuter road use in less densely populated areas is generally aimed at traveling to and from more populated areas for work, shopping, and so on. As such, the number of available roadway options for commuters simply passing through less populated regions are numerous. Even if commuters must travel slightly further to bypass MBUF areas, it is likely that regular commuters will do so to avoid consistently paying for access to certain roadways. If commuters intend to find different routes in order to bypass MBUF roadways, local residents will receive a smaller amount of funds from MBUF roads. In addition, local businesses that rely on commuter traffic to generate revenues will lose customer traffic through the utilization of MBUFs, reducing the ability to employ several workers, spatially mismatched or otherwise.

Since MBUFs have not yet proved a viable option for either urban centers or less populated areas, and public transit systems are inadequate or inaccessible for spatially mismatched workers in nearly all regions, a more probable transportation option that provides benefits for residents in both urban centers and less populated areas must be determined. Solely private transportation businesses, such as taxi companies, provide services in many areas of different population density. In New York City, six hundred thousand passengers used taxi services per day in 2014, which totaled 236 million passengers for the year. In addition, there were approximately fifty thousand New York City taxi drivers in 2014 that each traveled roughly seventy thousand miles annually, proving that taxi services were nearly always accessible to travelers. In the same year, sixty percent of taxis were also hybrid-electric vehicles, which reduced gasoline consumption and carbon emissions (TLC 2014, "2014 Taxicab Factbook," 1-11).

However, the sheer number of taxis in use in New York City, an already highly congested area, adds to the traffic of the city. Thusly, spatially mismatched workers are condemned to the same slow transportation speed as public transit services. Furthermore, the charge rate per taxi trip in New York City is two dollars and fifty cents plus "50 cents per 1/5 mile or 50 cents per 60 seconds in slow traffic or when the vehicle is stopped" (TLC, "Metered Fare Information"). As such, spatially mismatched workers must also pay substantial fares for each trip to and from work. While less densely populated areas generally do not face the same amount of traffic as urban centers such as New York City, the fares on taxis in these areas regularly use the same fare system and, therefore, taxi use in less populated areas remains an economically unfeasible transportation option for several spatially mismatched workers.

In order to alleviate the economic detriments taxi use potentially presents for spatially mismatched workers, several governments around the world have utilized taxi subsidies. For example, in Australia, the “Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) provides subsidised travel, allowing approved participants to travel by taxi at half fare, up to a maximum subsidy of \$30 per trip.” However, Australia’s TTSS only provides subsidized taxi transportation to individuals with severe medical conditions who have been reviewed by the government agency’s “medical assessor” (TfNSW, “Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS)”). With regard to the Australian transportation subsidy system, individuals are not applicable for government subsidies based on their sole economic condition, but through a solely medical approach.

Taxi subsidies in the United States, “popularized as ‘user-side subsidies’ in the 1970s, were conceived as a means for reducing the costs of existing transportation services for the elderly and people with disabilities by placing the subsidy funds directly in the hands of the users.” While the original conception of user-side transportation subsidies in the United States advocated for subsidizing transportation for only the disabled, the pool of possible users has expanded since the 1970s. The number of government and nongovernment agencies offering “taxi coupons” or “taxi scrips” totaled in the hundreds in the 2010s. The user-side subsidy programs utilized in the United States, which provide subsidies to taxi users and allow the users to choose their own taxi provider, proved advantageous for both taxi riders, the agencies offering subsidies, and taxicab companies (TRB 2012, “Local and State Partnerships with Taxicab Companies,” 27). For taxi users, the costs of consistently using taxi services to travel to and from work or other locations are substantially reduced; for

agencies offering subsidies, liabilities declined by allowing riders to choose their own taxi provider; for local or state governments, new transportation options are unnecessary since subsidized taxi rides offer riders with a public good; and for taxi companies, additional customers are generated and the companies receive the same amount of money per ride through third party payers (TRB 2012, "Local and State Partnerships with Taxicab Companies," 27-28).

One example of an advantageous taxi subsidy program began in Baltimore, Maryland in 2005 through the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). The program, "now called Taxi Access II, provided 286,000 [taxi] rides in 2010 at a cost to MTA of \$3.9 million excluding broker fees. Eight taxi companies and two sedan companies in Baltimore and nearby communities participate[d]" (TRB 2012, "Local and State Partnerships with Taxicab Companies," 27). The program's original design allowed a participant to take up to four rides a day and use taxis for rides that totaled fifty dollars in fares or less. The riders only had to pay a three-dollar cash total to the taxi driver per trip as well. However, as mentioned, government transportation agencies are generally extremely strained financially, and the MTA is no exception. In 2007, the MTA paid roughly 8.4 million dollars in fares for 382,000 taxi trips, with the average trip fare totaling 21.91 dollars. As consequence, the MTA was forced to amend the Taxi Access II program to allow riders to take two taxi trips per day that totaled no more than twenty dollars per fare. The program proved immensely advantageous for riders, but vastly too expensive for the MTA, while the increased productiveness of riders through taxi subsidies remained unknown (TRB 2012, "Local and State Partnerships with Taxicab Companies," 27).

Another example of taxi subsidies in the United States is provided through the City of Los Angeles. Los Angeles' taxi subsidy program—Cityride—“offers participants reduced costs for the purchase of rides on City-permitted taxicabs or Cityride Dial-A-Ride services” (TRB 2012, “Local and State Partnerships with Taxicab Companies,” 28-29). The initial Cityride program offered participants with access to a booklet with eighty-four dollars in coupons for various transportation options, which participants paid five dollars to obtain. Each participant “could use up to a maximum of \$12 worth of coupons for each taxi trip” and “multiple participants riding together could pool their coupons for a longer trip.” While the coupon-based system appeared advantageous in theory, the practical use of the coupon system ultimately proved flawed due to fraudulent practice; “for instance, some participants would sell... coupons to their friends, and sometimes passengers would complain that drivers had taken more than the appropriate number of coupons for a trip” (TRB 2012, “Local and State Partnerships with Taxicab Companies,” 28-29). Due to immense amounts of disorganization within the system, the exact rise in rider productiveness through the program is also unknown (TRB 2012, “Local and State Partnerships with Taxicab Companies,” 28-29).

In addition to the inherent flaws in the Taxi Access II and Cityride programs, both programs also solely targeted residents over the age of sixty-five or residents with disabilities. Similarly to the Australian model, Baltimore and Los Angeles' user-side subsidies did not allow healthy individuals simply experiencing spatial mismatches access to adequate transportation options. Furthermore, these programs affected only individuals living directly within or immediately nearby urban centers, leaving citizens within less populated areas out of consideration for such

services. As such, different services must be analyzed to determine if spatially mismatched workers can benefit from privately operated transportation services.

One transportation service that offers citizens fare-based transportation is Uber. Uber Technologies, Inc. was founded in 2009 as “an alternative service to taxi cabs,” which allows customers to request trips via smartphone devices (Piliéci 2014). Employment with Uber is as easy as it is flexible; driving positions are available to anyone with a valid driver's license and access to a vehicle; in addition, Uber drivers can select the times and areas that they wish to drive (Uber, “Work That Puts You First”). As such, Uber acts as a conduit between community residents that assist one another with their financial and transportation needs. As of April 2016, Uber operates in over sixty countries and in or around approximately four hundred cities and/or towns (Uber, “Where is Uber Currently Available?”).

Through the use of the Internet and the increased popularity of Uber on both the user and provider-sides of the service, Uber potentially offers residents from areas of all population sizes access to expedient transportation options. However, in larger urban centers, the same issue of traffic congestion possibly reduces the feasibility of Uber services for spatially mismatched workers that must travel long distances quickly. Also, in less densely populated areas, the number of Uber users may be smaller, thusly reducing the incentive for individuals to drive for Uber as well. Furthermore, the price of Uber services are immense, especially for financially disadvantaged residents. The base fare price in New York City and in several other regions of the United States is seven dollars, with the remaining fare for a trip calculated based on time and distance. Prices can additionally vary based on the type of Uber service a rider uses, which

consist of UberX, UberXL, UberBlack, or UberSUV (Goode 2011; Uber, “Where is Uber Currently Available?”; Uber, “How are Fares Calculated?”). Again, in less populated areas, the Uber options available to riders are likely to be fewer, potentially forcing a rider to utilize one of the more expensive options and further reducing the feasibility of Uber as an option for economically disadvantaged individuals.

However, increased ridership through Uber potentially offers the opportunity for more Uber options in all regions of the United States. As more individuals become riders of the service, an increasingly large number of individuals with vehicles may view the expanding market for Uber transportation advantageous enough to become a driver, thus offering additional options and services to local residents. Yet the issue of pricing for all Uber options remains at the forefront of this discussion. In 2015, in an attempt to stimulate ridership with Uber, Uber Technologies, Inc. cut fares by up to twenty percent in forty-eight United States cities. Since the conception and establishment of Uber, several other similar companies, such as Lyft, have been founded. The introduction of new ride-sharing transportation services disallowed Uber to continue to charge higher fare rates and remain competitive across the country. With increased competition, spatially mismatched workers and all potential riders accessed decreased Uber service prices (Huet 2015). Unfortunately, the twenty percent fare reduction still leaves Uber services several dollars more expensive than traditional taxicab or other private transportation Services.

Recognizing the substantial benefit that Uber services present to local economies through helping workers travel to and from work more expediently and introducing new job opportunities for Uber drivers, but

also the inherent expenses of Uber transportation, Altamonte Springs, Florida—a town of roughly forty-two thousand residents—established a “first-in-the-nation” Uber subsidy “pilot program.” City manager Frank Martz claimed that he was “tired of waiting for Central Florida to move on transit [improvements],” so Altamonte Springs began a subsidy program to lessen the detriments of inadequate public transportation for city residents. Martz and Mayor Patricia Bates’ program “will pay... ride-sharing service[s] such as Lyft and Uber... up to \$500,000 over the next year [2016],” and offer “a unique municipal subsidy that covers 20% of any ride that begins and ends in the city” and “25% if it begins or ends at the local light rail station.” Conversely to Baltimore’s Taxi Access II and Los Angeles’ Cityride programs, all city residents and guests can access the subsidy program by entering “the promo code ALTAMONTE in the [Uber smartphone] app” (Sisson 2016). Altamonte Springs’ program is among the most equitable transportation subsidy programs established within the United States, and offers opportunities for spatially mismatched workers and all city residents with inadequate transportation options to attain speedy transit throughout the city.

Unfortunately, Altamonte Springs was not one of the forty-eight cities targeted for base fare reductions by Uber (Zara 2015). As such, the twenty to twenty-five percent fare reduction by Martz and Bates does not significantly reduce the price of Uber or Lyft trips to an overwhelmingly affordable price for economically disadvantaged city residents. Yet, as with the creation of ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft in general, Altamonte Springs’ subsidy system is still a new conception, which, if repeated elsewhere, could potentially lessen the price of Uber or Lyft fares to consistently affordable prices for city residents. The advent of Uber or



Lyft subsidy programs, coupled with an increase in Uber or Lyft drivers in both urban centers and less populated regions yields opportunities for citizens to attain speedy and affordable transit options that otherwise prove inadequate. Additionally, as with previous taxi subsidy programs, Uber and Lyft drivers are less likely to care whether or not their fares are subsidized by governments or nongovernmental actors, as they continue to receive the same amount of money per fare. As such, increasing Uber and Lyft subsidy programs also yields the potential for larger numbers of rides for drivers, which would increase the feasibility for local residents to consider Uber or Lyft as prosperous job opportunities, continuing to increase the economic benefit for local economies.

Yet, without more research on both ride-sharing services and ride-sharing subsidies, it is unknown what the actual impact of increasing ride-sharing services and subsidies would be. Close examination of Altamonte Springs' subsidy program as a case study over the course of 2016 will surely provide a better idea as to the extent of such subsidy programs' impact. For the time being, Uber and Lyft services are far too expensive and potentially inexpedient for spatially mismatched workers in urban centers, and too expensive and potentially inaccessible for spatially mismatched workers in less populated regions of the United States.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Through careful examination of previous and current public transit services, it is clear that, in general, spatially mismatched workers have not and do not benefit from public transportation in all regions of the United States. The time that public transit services take to transport workers and other citizens to and from their jobs or other areas simply shifts residents' travel burden from a physical inconvenience (i.e. walking, bicycling, etc.) to

a financial or time-based inconvenience. Furthermore, less populated areas and certain urban centers do not have the infrastructure readily available to undertake large public transit implementation or improvement projects.

Regarding road pricing programs, the benefits of MBUFs potentially allow citizens access to greater funds but the exact amount of money each local resident would receive from MBUFs fluctuates greatly based on a number of variables. As such, more research is needed on the impact of MBUFs in the form of case studies for both urban centers and less populated areas.

Taxi and ride-sharing service subsidies continue to prove difficult for governments and nongovernmental actors to adequately implement and maintain. Subsidies to taxi and ride-sharing services are either too expensive for the agencies offering the subsidies or do not provide enough of a financial incentive to riders to become feasible options. While Altamonte Springs' subsidy program certainly appears to provide a fruitful case study for further examination, this program is still in the very early stages of implementation and does not currently offer enough information regarding Uber and Lyft subsidies to determine if similar subsidy programs would prove advantageous in other regions of the United States.

None of the three transportation programs/options analyzed in this study overtly provide spatially mismatched workers with adequate, expedient, and reliable transit opportunities necessary to improve their work productivity and the productivity of their communities. However, combining several of the aforementioned transportation programs into a single transportation program would potentially alleviate governments and workers' issues with the current condition of transportation in the United States. Specifically, utilizing road pricing tools to fund public or private

transit services potentially offers opportunities for spatially mismatched workers to expedite travel to and from work at cheaper prices than those currently provided by public or private transportation options in both urban centers and areas that are less populated.

If MBUFs were implemented, local or state governments would gain access to increased funds from public infrastructures that are currently not generating revenue. Rather than reallocating the revenue generated by public infrastructure charges to private citizens, these funds could be pooled in an account set aside by governments specifically to be used on public or private transportation subsidies. Once governments receive a significant amount of capital from MBUFs, the funds would be used to subsidize public or private transportation services within a designated region in a similar manner as those utilized by Baltimore, Los Angeles, or Altamonte Springs. While the exact amount of capital the MBUFs would generate cannot currently be known, it is arguable that the amount would be substantial. Where Geddes and Nentchev's idea of dividing this large amount of capital among all residents of a certain jurisdiction potentially only results in a small amount of capital per resident or household, pooling these funds for a single public good would yield a greater amount of available capital for governments to undertake larger subsidy programs. It is arguable that the increased capital resources of transportation agencies would allow these agencies to offer greater transportation subsidies to spatially mismatched workers and all economically disadvantaged residents.

In addition to making public or private transportation services more affordable through MBUF funds, MBUFs also potentially lessen traffic congestion on public roads by charging commuters more during busier

hours of the day. As such, public and private transportation services gain the ability to accelerate the rate at which they can transport riders from one location to another, since commuters will be incentivized to travel at different times of day or carpool to reduce the price they are charged through MBUFs. With greater subsidies and reduced traffic congestion, spatially mismatched workers attain opportunities to reach work and home at quicker rates and reduced prices, thus increasing the amount of time these individuals can spend engaging in activities other than traveling to and from work in inadequate ways.

However, traffic congestion is a much larger issue for urban centers than less populated areas and may not be a large factor deterring spatially mismatched from utilizing public or private transportation services in uncongested regions of the United States. Yet similar, and potentially greater, benefits exist for less populated areas utilizing the MBUF subsidy system. State governments can use MBUFs on roads that are utilized to bypass less populated towns to funnel commuters into business districts of less densely resided towns. Since many of these towns do not face the extreme traffic congestion issues of big cities, adding additional commuters, a majority of whom currently already use these towns to travel to and from urban centers, would not overwhelmingly increase traffic in less populated towns. As such, MBUFs could be used to assist local businesses attract additional customers during travel times of the day, further increasing the need for workers and productivity of local communities. The MBUF-subsidy system offers workers in less populated areas with affordable fare rates and businesses the opportunities to grow financially from more commuter traffic.

Although none of the initially analyzed transportation programs yield great benefits for spatially mismatched workers, it is possible that workers can attain more advantageous transportation options through combining certain aspects of all the studied programs. More research is needed to determine if MBUFs and ride-sharing subsidies generate benefits to local communities, yet the current projects currently underway in certain regions of the country, such as in Altamonte Springs, will provide further answers in the near future. Though there is currently no clear answer to the question this study addresses scholars, workers, community activists, and politicians should remain optimistic that further gains can soon be made regarding improving spatially mismatched workers and communities' productivity through public or private transportation.

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***The Silent Sex: Gender, Deliberation and Institutions.* By Christopher F. Karpowitz and Tali Mendelberg (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014)**

In *The Silent Sex*, Christopher F. Karpowitz and Tali Mendelberg establish that Americans are strongly in favor of deliberative democracy. When asked in a national survey what they deem “the best way for officials to learn what the majority of people in our country think about important issues”, Americans’ number one answer was town meeting, and their second favorite form of participation in the democratic process (after contacting a public official directly) is to partake in deliberative venues (p.8). The authors point out that in order for a deliberative forum to democratically represent and communicate the opinions of all citizens equally, demographic factors such as race and gender should not impede on the ability to participate. Nevertheless, the authors assert the extent and quality of participation in our deliberative processes are significantly manipulated by a citizen’s gender.

The authors build on critical mass theory, which posits that, when women are in the minority in a deliberative process, they participate less and

are less influential in setting the agenda than are men. Karpowitz and Mendelberg then set out to explore the conditions under which women are best able to achieve an effective voice in deliberative forums. While prior research has mainly focused on the gender composition of deliberative bodies, the authors looked to another feature of the political institutions wherein deliberation occurs—namely its decision rule. Minutes from eighty-seven school board meetings across twenty states were evaluated to stress the applicability of the findings (and to amplify the external validity) of a controlled experiment.

The authors’ findings are nothing short of troubling, as they suggest that women participate significantly less than men do in deliberative processes, and that even when they do participate, their involvement carries drastically less influence on the deliberation outcome than their male counterparts. However, the rate and influence of participation varies based upon the type of decision rule being employed. More specifically, when women are in the minority, and majority rule is employed (which is the most common constellation in real world political deliberation), they participate and influence the outcome less than men.



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Similarly, a deficit occurs even for women who are in the majority when unanimous rule is employed. Additionally, the participation of men is less impacted when they hold the minority status within a group than is the participation of women under those circumstances, regardless of the form of decision rule employed in a deliberative setting. Outcomes of deliberation also significantly fluctuate depending on decision rule and gender composition. These findings suggest that women are not accurately represented in the current status quo of political institutions and that features of those political institutions manipulate the outcomes of political deliberation enormously.

Karpowitz and Mendelberg's thoroughness in laying out the theoretical groundwork, addressing alternate explanations, conducting their experiment and, finally, underpinning their hypotheses with empirical data, is highly impressive and contributes to the validity of their research findings. Furthermore, their novel approach of studying deliberation by tracking the compositional and institutional mechanisms of interest, rather than conducting pre- and post-deliberation surveys, allows them to explain relationship between

deliberative processes and deliberative outcomes with greater accuracy. In doing so, the authors remind us that decision processes and rules have a significant impact upon how citizens participate.

Despite these substantial contributions to the gender equality debate concerning political institutions, the book has one overarching shortcoming. Given their findings regarding the interaction of gender composition and decision rules, the authors suggest that "[w]hen women are outnumbered by men, [one should] use unanimous rule. When women are a large majority, [one should] use majority rule" (p.141). However, active alternation between decision rules due to gender composition within any political institution seems, at the very least, a rather unrealistic solution to the problem of the gender gap in representation and participation in political institutions. Due to the unattainable nature of this normative assessment, a four-hundred page treatise seems overly lengthy, albeit incredibly thorough.

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***Independent Politics, How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction.* By Samara Klar and Yanna Krupinov (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016).**

Contemporary political scientists operate under the understanding that independent voters are often less consequential than commonly thought because they vote as consistently for their more-preferred party as do their admittedly-partisan counterparts. Even if these independent voters do not publicly identify with a party, their undercover partisanship will come through in the voting booth. In *Independent Politics*, by Samara Klar and Yanna Krupinov, the authors assert that despite the similarities between independents and partisans in their voting behavior, the phenomenon of independents has far reaching consequences for American democracy.

Additionally, political scientists have found no notable demographic differences between partisans and independents (page 4-5). However, while they may vote the same, and on the whole look the same, the authors contend that the differences between the two groups do, in fact, matter. Partisan voters want everyone to

know their party affiliation, while independents mask their preference like an embarrassing guilty pleasure. Why? Does it matter how independents identify, if they consistently vote to the left or right, just like partisans? Are there any larger implications of such behavior? Samara Klar and Yanna Krupinov used their own extensive surveys, and secondary survey data to take a new and weighty look at independent voters in the United States.

When theorizing, Klar and Krupinov viewed political identification as an important and dynamic part of an individual's social identity. What these authors then establish, however, is that partisanship is viewed very negatively by much of American society. Their nationally representative surveys show that people have highly unfavorable views of partisanship, and partisan people. Most survey respondents did not even want to live near partisan people, and respondents rated people as looking more untrustworthy and unattractive if the face was labeled as partisan (page 79). Publicized ugly disagreements and legislative gridlock exacerbate this problem by further repelling voters. The authors reason that people hide their preferences because of the

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social undesirability of partisanship.

This explanation may resonate with readers based on their own, personal anecdotal experiences. Many people change the channel when political attack ads come on, eschew talking politics at the dinner table, and hesitate to post their political views on Facebook even when they are confident in their beliefs. Appearing too political is a social taboo. Instead, presenting oneself as an independent seems to lend an air of objectivity, of open-mindedness, and of being above the nasty business of politics.

Backed by their survey results, the authors further extrapolate that if people are concealing their preferences when they identify because of social desirability factors, that these same individuals are much less likely to express themselves in a partisan way. This may seem plainly evident but this is the crux of their research. Though they may vote similarly to partisans, independent voters are far less likely to chat to their friends about their political inclinations, post to social media about politics, wear a sticker, have a yard sign, and will almost certainly not be found volunteering for a campaign. These are some of the most functional ways to participate in

the political process. The authors posit that this lack of desire to publicly express ones political leanings is very problematic for the two major political parties. since Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. rely on grassroots efforts, and citizen-to-citizen advocacy.

This research is very interesting, and supports a hypothesis that once explained, seems apparent: partisanship often repels people, and thus is socially undesirable. As such people call themselves independents and do not express themselves and participate politically because such behavior would blow their non-partisan cover.

One aspect of the research that can be improved upon by future researchers, however, is Klar and Krupinov's measurement of political social media behavior, which in today's world is highly relevant and certainly worth exploring. To do this the authors created their own social media platform and invited students from the same University (to create a better sense of community on the platform) to post about political issues. This seemed a poor substitute for measuring activity on platforms like Twitter and Facebook given that any constructed network will lack the authenticity—and, therefore,

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external validity— of activity that can be found on the most popular social networking sites.

The authors' reliance on current survey samples also leaves open the question of how their findings concerning the inaction of today's independent voters contrast with independents of the past, and

whether we should expect the introduction of social media to further exacerbate this democratic dilemma in the long run.

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