Partisanship or Culture?

The Effects of Information Variety and Volume on Trust

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Do Eon Lee and Sean Fischer *
The Annenberg School for Communication
doeon.lee@asc.upenn.edu — sean.fischer@asc.upenn.edu

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Abstract

There is little doubt over the existence of affective polarization, but findings on the related causal effects of party cues on non-political behavior may be affected by design decisions related to the volume and types of information used in experiments, as well as the trust framework employed. Here, we consider how these effects vary across low and high information environments for a less impactful trust context replicating initial trust conditions.

We find that in low trust conditions, the effects of party cues are stable between party groups and are strong relative to the effects of other pieces of information about race, gender, religion, religiosity, policy preferences, and cultural preferences. However, such effects are reduced and become highly moderated by party affiliation within the high information environment. These findings suggest that differences between the implications of earlier research on the behavioral consequences of affective polarization and daily life may be explained by assumptions made in the design of earlier studies.

1 Introduction

Scholars have firmly established the existence of affective polarization within the mass public. Yet, we are still untangling the behavioral consequences of this phenomenon. Observational studies have found evidence of the increasing salience of partisanship when making decisions across a variety of non-political situations (Huber and Malhotra, 2017; Gift and Gift, 2015; McConnell et. al., 2018), while experimental evidence (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Carlin and Love, 2013) has shown that party cues significantly alter interpersonal behavior. The general conclusion from this line of work has been that party-based discrimination occurs and that it is just as strong as, if not stronger than, other forms of discrimination, such as race-based discrimination.

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However, there is obvious space to expand and deepen these results. First, the importance of party cues has been inferred through comparisons to only a few alternatives, such as race. In daily life, we encounter a wide variety of cues from individuals' personal attributes. How does party compare to several of these? Second, experimental studies establishing the causal effect of party cues on behavior have broadly utilized limited information environments. These studies only randomize cues about the party and only one other factor, such as race. Information is interactive and many cues are often available at the same time from individuals' personal attributes. Finally, experimental studies of the causal effects of party cues rely on behavioral frameworks simulating one specific context for trust. The common trust game employed in these studies (Berg, Dickhaut, and McCabe, 1995) places trust in the context of an allocation or reward-punish framework. But, trust can also manifest in less charged contexts, notably at the initial stages of relationships.

In order to address these concerns, we conducted two different studies employing a modified trust game replicating the context of initial trust conditions. Across these two studies, we varied the amount of information made visible to subjects playing the game, but in both, we randomize attributes for party, race, gender, religion, as well as three more abstract features, religiosity, policy preferences, and cultural preferences. Doing so allows us to infer, between the two studies, how behavior changes between trust paradigms and in relation to the volume and types of information presented. We find that in the low information version of our game (Study 1), party cues function consistently and strongly between the parties. But, in our high information study (Study 2), the strength of such effects is reduced as other features become more salient, notably cues related to similarity in cultural preferences. These effects are further moderated by party affiliation.

2 Background

2.1 Affective Polarization and its Consequences

Affective polarization is the case of partisans diverging in their feelings towards members of the other party and members of their own party, regardless of their policy positions. Since the 1980s, American partisans have steadily developed more animosity towards the other party, while keeping evaluations of their own party constant (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, 2012). These divergences have been linked to the social sorting of the parties (Mason, 2018), as well as changes in political rhetoric (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, 2012) and the emergence of partisan media (Levendusky, 2013).

In its most common form, affective polarization produces prejudices against the out-party and its members that manifest in attitudes and preferences. For example, American partisans would prefer that their children not marry a member of the other party (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, 2012; Hersh, 2016). However, in these cases of survey instruments, it is unclear whether or not partisans are expressing opinions and attitudes about regular members of the public or political elites (Druckman and Levendusky, Forthcoming).

Lab experiments (e.g. Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Carlin and Love, 2013) have been employed to help resolve the uncertainty of survey measures and to answer the core question of how does

affective polarization affect behavioral responses to information. The specific designs have utilized a behavioral trust game (Berg, Dickhaut, and McCabe, 1995) and the manipulation of cues about other players' personal attributes. Even so, such lab studies, while ideal for establishing causality and internal validity, struggle to reproduce representative information environments and, as a result, have limited external validity. We are particularly concerned about the limited variety of cues provided, as scholars tend to focus on the effects of party affiliation and a single alternative cue, such as race, education, or religion (e.g., Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; McConnell et. al., 2018).

While these are some of the most salient and divisive group divisions, varying only one or two of them at a time is a poor representation of our daily information environments, in which we can gather many cues about an individuals' personal attributes all at once. Given that information presentation (Andersen and Ditonto, 2018) and captive audience restrictions (Druckman, Fein, and Leeper, 2012) can affect results, these results and inferences should be considered with some apprehension.

2.2 Social Trust formation and the Relationship with Information

As addressed previously, causal inferences drawn from lab experiments often rely on the context of an allocation or reward-punishment framework, which replicates situations of repeated interaction. Yet, our day-to-day relationships are comprised of those based on social trust formed through multiple interactions and experiences, but also those based on *initial* social trust. Initial social trust is a type of trust developed in relationships including an unfamiliar trustee, much like an encounter with a stranger. Unlike social trust based on social exchanges, initial trust takes place in cases in which actors do not have meaningful information about the other, nor affective bonds with the other person (McKnight, Choudhury, and Kacmar, 2002).

The main difference in the formation of social trust in the allocation framework, which is traditionally utilized in studies of affective polarization, and the initial trust framework is the role of uncertainty and risk-taking. By initially trusting a stranger, we automatically put ourselves in the position of uncertainty and unpredictability. Even if the stranger does not betray us outright, the outcome might differ from our expectation (Sheppard and Sherman, 1998). Within the framework of allocation games, players are empowered to allocate resources in normatively fair or unfair ways, even though such behavior is only possible in daily life after prolonged experiences of interaction with another individual. Although this condition for application to daily life does not imply that the dynamic demonstrated in the allocation framework is unrealistic, approaching human interactions from an initial trust perspective is expected to expand our understanding of interactions between individuals to encompass behavior in social relationships with limited or no history.

As the establishment of trust entails the assumption of risk, people take different kinds of information into consideration in order to minimize the amount of uncertainty inherent in trusting processes. Initial trust involves an unfamiliar trustee and insufficient credibility along with meaningful information about the relationship (Bigley & Pearce, 1998), and thus the information needed

for the initial formation of trust is different from the information needed for trust in ongoing and interactive relationships (McKnight & Chervany, 2006). As there is not enough first-hand experience that can be used as bases of trust, characteristics extrinsic to the trustee, such as their social categorization, reputation, sanctions, roles, norms, and assumptions, are used to determine the level of trust toward the other person (McKnight & Chervany, 2006; McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany, 1998; Meyerson et al., 1996).

In making such a decision, one of the frequently-used indicators is the social groups a trustee belongs to and the social roles they fill (Sztompka, 1999). For each social group and context, people hold different expectations, based on previous interactions with others from that social group — when people interact with individuals from other groups, people often perceive the others as the representatives of their respective groups (Williams, 2001). Trust in the collective is often used as a proxy for the trust in an individual about whom we have limited or absent knowledge. For instance, when people go to see a doctor, their level of trust in that never-met-doctor will be influenced by their previous interactions with other doctors. Even if people do not have specific information or particular personal interactions with the doctor they see, people tend to set their base level of trust by putting that doctor into the same social group with other doctors.

Such base-level trust plays an important role in future interactions, as well. The more trusting attitude the trustor has toward the trustee, the more likely the trustor will take more risks of cooperating with others, thus allowing them to acquire more information about the trustee's trustworthiness (Hardin, 2002). On the contrary, the lower level of initial trust leads the trustor to take fewer risks in cooperating with the trustee, acquiring less information about the trustee, ultimately making it difficult for the trustor to build trust with the trustee. This cycle of trust and distrust exemplifies the importance of the formation of initial trust; how much initial trust is formed between the trustor and the trustee not only can decide their current relationship but can also influence their future interactions.

2.3 Social Trust, Partisanship, and Alternative Information Cues

Given the influence, initial trust can have on future relationships, a better understanding of how different information cues influence the formation of initial trust is crucial to disentangling how we form and express trust towards other people. In particular, it is imperative to consider whether partisanship drives initial trust, as in studies of affective polarization and allocation games. Such a finding has normative implications for overcoming the spiral of negative consequences affective polarization and negative partisanship produce. One hope, based on anecdotal observations of daily life, is that other social identities, while less value charged, may be easier to make salient and subsequently drive behavior.

One specific alternative that we believe may play an important role in the formation and expression of trust is fandom, which can also be described as shared cultural preferences. The social identity perspective of fandom is already common in the context of sports, in which individuals associate themselves with specific teams (Jenkins, 2014). Given their apolitical nature, these cues

may be particularly appealing pieces of information for individuals to act upon, especially for those for whom politics is less important. Furthermore, general social norms may promote the use of these cues when developing and expressing trust as they may provide a more widespread basis for positive social relationships.

2.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Given these background materials, we propose the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: How does increasing the diversity of information affect the exhibition of trust?

RQ2: How does increasing the volume of information affect the exhibition of trust?

H1a: Cues related to non-political attributes, such as cultural preferences, will have as much of an effect on trust-related decision making as party cues.

H1b The magnitude of the effect non-party cues will be moderated by strength of subjects' partisanship.

H2: The high information environment will produce effects for party cues that are smaller relative to the effects of other information than those produced in the low information environment.

3 Research Design and Data

To answer these questions and assess these hypotheses we conducted two studies. Both Study 1 and 2 utilized an online trust game embedded in a survey experiment. Upon recruitment, subjects were deceived and told that they would be partaking in a series of games with other players. In reality, they were shown simulated players, which we refer to as simulated confederates. In each game, subjects were told that they would be paired with two other players and that they would need to pick one of the other players knowing that if that player were to also select them, then both would be eligible for a bonus payout. Obviously, since subjects were playing these games with simulated confederates, there was no actual matching. Instead, upon completion of each study, we debriefed subjects on the deception and gave them all a bonus payout.

In other words, subjects were asked to select the player whom they thought would most likely choose them back. However, this game was an extensive game, so no choice was made in reciprocation to the other players' choices. The game focused on how people weigh different pieces of information, or cues, in order to assess the risk of either decision and ultimately trust one of the other players. Thus, the type of trust measured through this game is a form of initial trust where people base their trust on information related to norms, roles, and assumptions, rather than information from ongoing and interactive past experiences (Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006).

To make the core deception in each study believable — and thus increase the validity of both studies — subjects were asked to complete a lengthy questionnaire that we told them was intended to assess features of their personality. In addition to the questions on demography, the

questionnaire included items evaluating explicit preferences for books, movies, television programs, and fashion, as well as items measuring subjects' religiosity and political policy preferences. Other items included scales for political efficacy, political trust, and feelings towards various racial groups. Upon completing the questionnaire, subjects were informed that their responses would be used to construct summary descriptions that would be used in the subsequent games.

The information profiles utilized in the two studies included cues for party identification, race, gender, and religion that all involved explicit labels. Three other features were also included: religiosity, policy preferences, and cultural preferences. As mentioned, subjects were told that the values for these information classes were generated by comparing their answers in the questionnaire to those of each player with whom they were matched. As such, these pieces of information were reported as either "Slightly Similar (0% - 45% match)", "Moderately Similar (45% - 75% match)", or "Highly Similar (75% - 100% match)".

For both of our studies, we employed conjoint experimental designs. Conjoint designs are particularly advantageous here because they allow us to estimate the causal effects of several different treatments simultaneously. The essential underlying assumption to these designs is that the properties one wishes to estimate the causal effects for are randomly assigned, guaranteeing their independence (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto, 2014).

In our experiments, the treatments are the displayed pieces of information. The actual information cues were all randomly assigned independently of all other treatments. As such, we can estimate the average marginal component effect (AMCE) for each individual piece of information, which is the marginal effect of the cue averaged over the joint distribution of all other classes of information (Hainmueller et. al., 2014). We estimate the AMCE by regressing our dependent variable, binary choice, on indicator variables for each class of information as a factor with levels associated with each specific piece of information. Doing so, we interpret our effects as the percentage point increase from baseline in the probability a subject would select a simulated confederate with the specific characteristics. Baselines are established for each class of information.

The subjects for both studies were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk). One point of concern with samples drawn from mTurk is their external validity. Recent studies showed, though, that mTurk workers are representative of the US population (Coppock, Leeper, and Mullinix, 2018; Mullinix et al., 2016). Additionally, mTurk samples are comparable to representative samples in regards to political ideology (Clifford, Jewell, and Waggoner, 2015). These considerations give us confidence in the external validity of our results.

4 Study 1

4.1 Methods

For Study 1, we placed subjects in a low information environment version of our trust game. The low information environment was defined by providing subjects with only one randomly selected piece of information about each of the two simulated confederates subjects were paired with. Each

piece of information was randomly assigned from all the available options within each category of information. For example, a participant could see Player 1 being "Independent, but I Lean Republican" and Player 2 being Female. As explained above, subjects were told the purpose of the game was to establish a reciprocal tie with one of the two other players. Subjects were informed that one of their pieces of information would be visible to the other players. Subjects played four games in this study.

4.2 Findings

Given that subjects were presented with simulated confederates that had randomly assigned characteristics that were displayed randomly, we could conduct a conjoint analysis by estimating a baseline OLS model regressing binary choices on the interaction effects between characteristics and visibility. The resulting model treated these interactions as the main effects of *seeing* particular pieces of information. Effects on the probability of choice are visualized in Figure 1.

Panel A of Figure 1 shows the effects of seeing each piece of information on selecting simulated confederates for the entire sample of subjects. For the entire group, we see a handful of significant factors. First, the policy preference and cultural preference scales follow an expected pattern where labeling simulated confederates as being highly similar significantly increased the probability of selection and labeling simulated confederates as being slightly similar significantly reduced the probability of being selected. However, the other similarity scale item, religiosity, did not have any significant effects across the entire range of scale values. Finally, the largest absolute effect for the entire sample occurred for labeling simulated confederates as having a race of "Other", which reduced the probability of selection by 0.30.

More interestingly, though, are the differences between the parties, shown in Panels B and C of Figure 1. The largest absolute effect for the Democrats in Panel B is generated by labeling simulated confederates as Republicans ($\beta = -0.36$). The only other effects close to this effect in magnitude and significance are the negative effect of labeling a simulated confederate as having a race captured by "Other" ($\beta = -0.27$) and the positive effect of labeling a simulated confederate as a Democrat ($\beta = 0.22$). Another notable effect for this group is the significant negative effect of labeling a simulated confederate as being a man ($\beta = -0.18$).

Republicans, on the other hand, respond significantly to more pieces of information. Similar to Democrats, Republicans have preferences for in-party members ($\beta = 0.27$) and avoid selecting out-party members ($\beta = -0.30$). But, they also were less likely to select simulated confederates labeled as being Hispanic or Latino ($\beta = -0.39$), or practicing Islam ($\beta = -0.44$), Hinduism, Buddhism, or any "Other" religion not covered by Christianity, Judaism, or Islam ($\beta = -0.28$). Republicans also reacted more strongly to the policy preferences scale than the Democrats, with the slightly ($\beta = -0.21$) and highly similar ($\beta = 0.28$) labels producing significant effects.

These unique effects between the parties suggest that there are important differences in how the members of the parties value different cues. That being said, it is notable that the effects of in- and out-party cues are nearly identical for each group. Such similarity points to the general value

given to party cues in social life.

4.3 Discussion

These results help to answer *RQ1* by giving us results to compare to earlier findings. Earlier experiments using allocation games (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Carlin and Love, 2013) found that the effect of party cues was similar to, if not slightly greater than the effects of race cues. In our study, we find similar evidence. Race cues only produce significant effects for Republicans, while party cues produced significant effects for members of both groups.

Additionally, party cue effects in earlier experimental contexts were often contextualized only in relation to racial cue effects. We can see here that for Republicans, the effects of specific cues regarding religion are also similar in magnitude to those for party cues. Additionally, preference cues, delivered on our similarity scale, produced comparable effects to party cues for Republicans. These substantive conclusions from such findings are twofold. First, party cues matter, even in diverse information environments. Their impact is not substantially reduced by increasing the number of types of information one could receive. Second, several types of information are given similar weight by partisans, depending on party.

The asymmetry in the parties that we observe here is also interesting. It reinforces stereotypes about each party, such as the Democratic party's acceptance of diversity and the anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant positions of the Republican party. However, the importance of cues using the similarity scales for Republicans and not Democrats is unexpected. The substantive conclusion is that Republicans imbue these cues with more meaning than Democrats.

5 Study 2

5.1 Methods

Study 2 involved placing subjects in high information versions of the same trust game from Study 1. The high information was characterized by the display of all seven pieces of randomly assigned information about each simulated confederate. To protect against order effects, we implemented a Latin-square design. Similar to Study 1, subjects were informed that the other players would also see their full profile. Subjects participating in Study 2 played four of the high-information games.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Conjoint Analysis

As in Study 1, by randomly assigning all seven pieces of information for each of the simulated confederates, we can employ a conjoint analysis to determine the effects each individual piece of information had on subjects' decision making. In this case, we estimate a baseline OLS model regressing binary choice on each piece of information. Baseline levels for the three similarity-scale items, religiosity, policy preferences, and cultural preferences, were the "Slightly Similar" levels.

For race, religion, party identification, and gender, the given baselines were "White", "Christian", "Independent" and "Man", respectively.

The effects of each individual piece of information used in our profiles are seen in Panel A of Figure 2. We see in the figure that in many ways the whole sample works as we would expect. For the three classes of information using our similarity scale of "Highly Similar", "Moderately Similar", and "Slightly Similar" moving up in similarity produces significant increases in the likelihood of a confederate being chosen.

The other significant effects across the whole sample are harder to explain on their face. However, examining the underlying sample characteristics provides some clarity; the sample does not include many Muslims (n = 13) or practitioners of what we refer to as "Non Big 3" religions (n = 37), "Hindu" , "Buddhist", or "Other" in our set of options. Republicans (n = 234) were also outnumbered by Democrats (n = 347) in the sample. Similarly, there were no subjects identifying as Middle Eastern in our sample. But, such an analysis does not provide an ad hoc rationale for the significant effect for women, as men (n = 363) and women (n = 345) are relatively balanced in the sample. As such, it appears that this effect is substantive.

Of course, we expect different groups to navigate the information environment in unique ways. We see such differences in Panels B and C of Figure 2, which visualize the effects of each piece of information on the probability of choosing a simulated confederate for Democrat and Republican subjects. In particular, there are noteworthy differences in the behavior of members from each party in regards to party cues. First, the two parties do not react to out-party labels equally. Democrats have a much more extreme reaction when simulated confederates are labeled as Republicans ($\beta = -0.19$) than when the opposite occurs with Republicans ($\beta = -0.10$). This difference is statistically significant (z = 2.13, p = 0.033). At the same time, the effect of in-party cues also differs between the parties. Pairing a Democratic subject with a Democratic simulated confederate has less of an effect ($\beta = 0.06$) on the probability of selecting the simulated confederate than the comparable situation has for Republicans ($\beta = 0.10$). Yet, in this case, the difference in effects does not meet conventional levels of significance (z = 0.95, p = 0.34). These results point towards an asymmetry in the effects of party cues on initial trust.

Additionally, we observed notable differences in the effects some non-party cues have on the probability of selection. For example, the effects of a simulated confederate being any non-Christian religion are indistinguishable from that of labeling a simulated confederate as being Christian for Democrats, except when simulated confederates were labeled as being Agnostic, Atheist, or non-practicing ($\beta = 0.06$). However, among Republicans, practicing Islam or any other non-Christian or non-Jewish faith produced negative effects, as noted earlier. In the same vein, Democrats did not have any effects for race cues that differed from the baseline effect of labeling a simulated confederate as being white. Republicans, though, were significantly less likely to select simulated confederates identified as being African American ($\beta = -0.11$) or Middle Eastern ($\beta = -0.14$) compared to those labeled as being white. These two groups also differed in how they responded to a simulated confederate being labeled as having a gender other than "Man" or "Woman": for Democrats, there

was no effect, but Republicans were less likely to select that confederate ($\beta = -0.09$).

5.2.2 Moderation by Strength of Partisanship

As detailed in *H1b* and *H2b*, the effects of all of the cues should be moderated by the subjects' strength of partisanship. Subjects identifying as Independents leaning towards one party or the other are likely to place less importance on party cues and more importance on apolitical information. Figure 3 visualizes the effects for each information cue for subjects broken down by party and strength of partisanship. Here we use the distinction between partisans fully identifying as belonging to a party and those identifying as Independents, but who lean towards one party or the other.

We see in Panels A and C, the differences between Democratic leaners and full partisans. The differences are substantial and significant. In regards to political information, the effect of party cues is shifted negatively for leaners regardless of whether the cue is an in-party or out-party signal. Each of these effects on the probability of selecting a simulated confederate have been reduced ($\Delta_R = -0.19$, $\Delta_D = -0.25$). Similarly, the effects of policy preferences on selecting a simulated confederate are reduced when moving from full partisans to leaners ($\Delta_{High} = -0.05$, $\Delta_{Mod} = -0.04$), but the differences are not close to being statistically significant ($z_{High} = 0.86, p_{High} = 0.39, z_{Mod} = 0.76, p_{Mod} = 0.45$). As for apolitical information, the effect of high levels of similarity in regards to cultural preferences is greater for Democratic leaners than full Democratic partisans ($\Delta = 0.15, z = 2.98, p = 0.0029$). The effect of labeling a simulated confederate as moderately similar in regards to culture changes in the same direction between leaners and full partisans($\Delta = 0.072$), but this shift does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance ($z = 1.43, p = 0.15$).

Effects for Republican leaners and full partisans are found in Panels B and D. Moving from full partisans to leaners, we see in these panels a negative shift in the effects of party cues similar to that for Democrats. The differences in this case are smaller in magnitude than those for Democrats ($\Delta_D = -0.17, \Delta_R = -0.15$). The changes in effects for policy preference cues are different than those for Democrats, though. For Republicans, moving from full partisans to leaners actually increased the estimated effect of seeing both the highly similar and moderately similar labels ($\Delta High = 0.092$,$\Delta_{Mod} = 0.027$). Neither of these changes, though, are statistically significant ($z_{High} = 1.61, p_{High} = 0.11, z_{Mod} = 0.44, p_{Mod} = 0.66$). Turning to apolitical information, though, we see that the effect of the highly similar and moderately similar labels for cultural preferences appear to be higher for Republican leaners than full partisans. This is, in fact, the case ($\Delta_{High} = 0.092, \Delta_{Mod} = 0.057$). However, once again, these differences are not statistically significance ($z_{High} = 1.57, p_{High} = 0.12, z_{Mod} = 0.91, p_{Mod} = 0.36$).

5.3 Discussion

The findings from Study 2 present some important differences in the magnitude of the effects of party cues, in line with *H2*. In the full information environment, we observe that the effect of

in-party cues, that is the difference in the probability of selecting a simulated confederate identified as being an in-party member instead of an Independent, shrinks from the low information environment to the high information environment ($\beta_{Low,R,R} = 0.27, \beta_{High,R,R} = 0.10, \beta_{Low,R,D} = -0.30, \beta_{High,R,D} = -0.10, \beta_{Low,D,R} = -0.36, \beta_{High,D,R} = -0.19, \beta_{Low,D,D} = 0.22, \beta_{High,D,D} = 0.06$). On average, the effects in the high information environment are 38% of those in the low information environment. This drop is indicative of a pattern of heightened consideration. Party cues presented in isolation can be taken at their maximum valence, but when many cues are presented simultaneously, subjects appear to consider and average the implications of multiple items. That subjects' processing reduces the impact of party cues suggests that one of the reasons partisan animosity has not undermined all social relationships is the presence of other social cues in our daily information environments.

The moderation results in Study 2 provide mixed evidence supporting *H1b*. We see in the results that partisan leaners, subjects who feel closer to one party or the other but do not identify as a member of that party, are both less likely to select a simulated confederate of the group they favor and from the group they do not favor, compared to full partisans. This shift across both types of party cues suggests that leaners are, in general, less receptive or caring about party cues than more attached partisans. As such, we can say that the effects of party cues are clearly moderated.

Yet, that being said, the effect of out-party cues actually ends up being larger in magnitude for leaners than for full partisans. Perfect adherence to *H1b* would suggest that the effects of in- and out-party cues should both move towards zero. The moderation mechanism, then, does not appear to be the move towards political apathy for leaners that we hypothesized. Instead, it appears that partisan leaners hold a negative impression of partisanship in general. One possible conclusion with implications for our understanding of affective polarization is that partisan leaners identify less well with the party than otherwise thought and employ a different cognitive weighting scheme when processing cues. Alternatively, partisan leaners may have carved out a unique political identity from that of a full-fledged partisan team member, especially given the increased popular discussion of political polarization and aggressive politics.

The former explanation appears more credible than the latter when we take into account the differences between leaners and non-leaners in the amount of weight they give to cues about shared cultural preferences. Among both Democrats and Republicans, the effects on the probability of leaners selecting a simulated confederate highly or moderately similar to them in regards to cultural preferences were higher for leaners than full partisans. (Although the difference was only statistically significant for Democrats.) However, if the explanation for the behavior of leaners in these games was that they had developed a unique anti-partisan identity, we would not expect them to have larger positive effects for the cultural preference scale. If, though, they simply were less interested in politics, then we *would* expect these subjects to place extra value in apolitical cues.

6 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to expand and deepen the results found in the literature of affective polarization by incorporating more diverse types of information than just political and racial cues, and by exposing individuals to an environment with more informational cues than one or two. In addition to the efforts to make the information environment more realistic, we attempted to create a more fundamental interaction between individuals by attempting to replicate the formation of initial trust with our game design.

In Study 1, subjects were placed in a low information environment where they saw one piece of randomly selected information about the two simulated confederates they were paired with. Similar to previous studies on affective polarization, racial and party cues had significant effects when people made decisions on trust even when compared with other pieces of information. Yet, an interesting finding was that each party differed in the cues that produced significant effects. For instance, race and religion cues generated significant effects only for Republicans. Such asymmetric significance placed onto different types of information by members of each political party implies that different meanings and values are given to different pieces of information depending on one's political identity.

As we hypothesized, Study 2 showed that individuals utilize various types of information ranging from political and racial cues to religion and cultural reference similarities. Some of these apolitical cues actually had a larger effect on whether a player signaled trust with a simulated confederate than political and racial cues. Given that we also found these traditional information items to have significant effects on trusting attitudes, we see this work as not contradicting the existing body of literature, but rather expanding it by suggesting that individuals manage multiple types of information simultaneously when developing initial trust.

Study 2 also showed that the strength of one's partisanship moderated the effect of party cues. Compared to the strong partisans, partisan leaners were less likely to select a simulated confederate that identified as having any partisan preference. They were also had larger effects for the highly similar and moderately similar levels of the cultural preference similarity scale. In conjunction, these suggest that leaners are less interested in politics, which affects how the value and process information cues.

To answer the leading question in our title, it appears that sharing cultural preferences plays a similar role to party affiliation when both cues are presented as part of a high information environment. As such, shared taste may allow individuals to develop a sense of collectivity and shared identity with strangers, as we know party affiliation does. These effects are greater for those who are less interested in politics. Results from Study 1 and 2 still suggest, though, that a party cue is an important piece of information when people make decisions on whether to trust someone or not. Yet, our results imply that the effect of party cue is much more complicated than previous studies have argued. In other words, it is difficult to argue that party cue is as meaningful a factor for partisans when different types of information are provided simultaneously. Considering how people process information about others in daily life, the information environment we are

exposed to is more similar to the multi-information environment which our experiment attempted to replicate than to single- or dual- information environments found in earlier experiments.

Yet, similar to other experimental designs, we cannot be certain that our results will generalize. Even though we aimed to obtain as much external validity as possible, our study was done still in a highly designed and artificial setting. Furthermore, with subjects playing multiple games, we cannot be sure that they were not able to guess the goal of the study while they were playing and if such guessing had altered their behaviors. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to our understanding of trust, information processing, and partisanship by expanding and deepening the understanding of how people utilize different pieces of information in deciding whether to establish initial trust with another.

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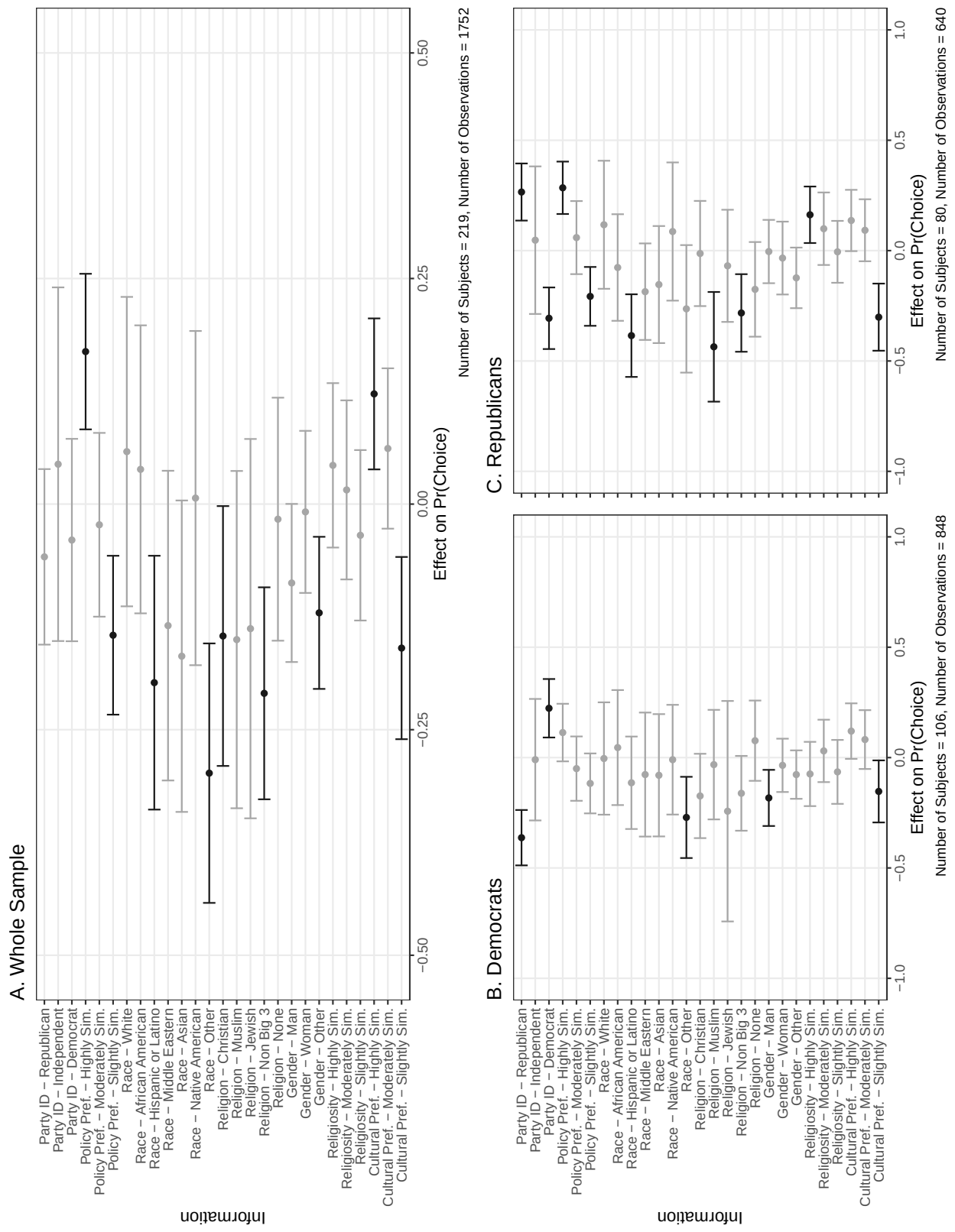

Figure 1: Estimated effects of seeing each piece of information as part of low information trust games. Significant effects are darkened.

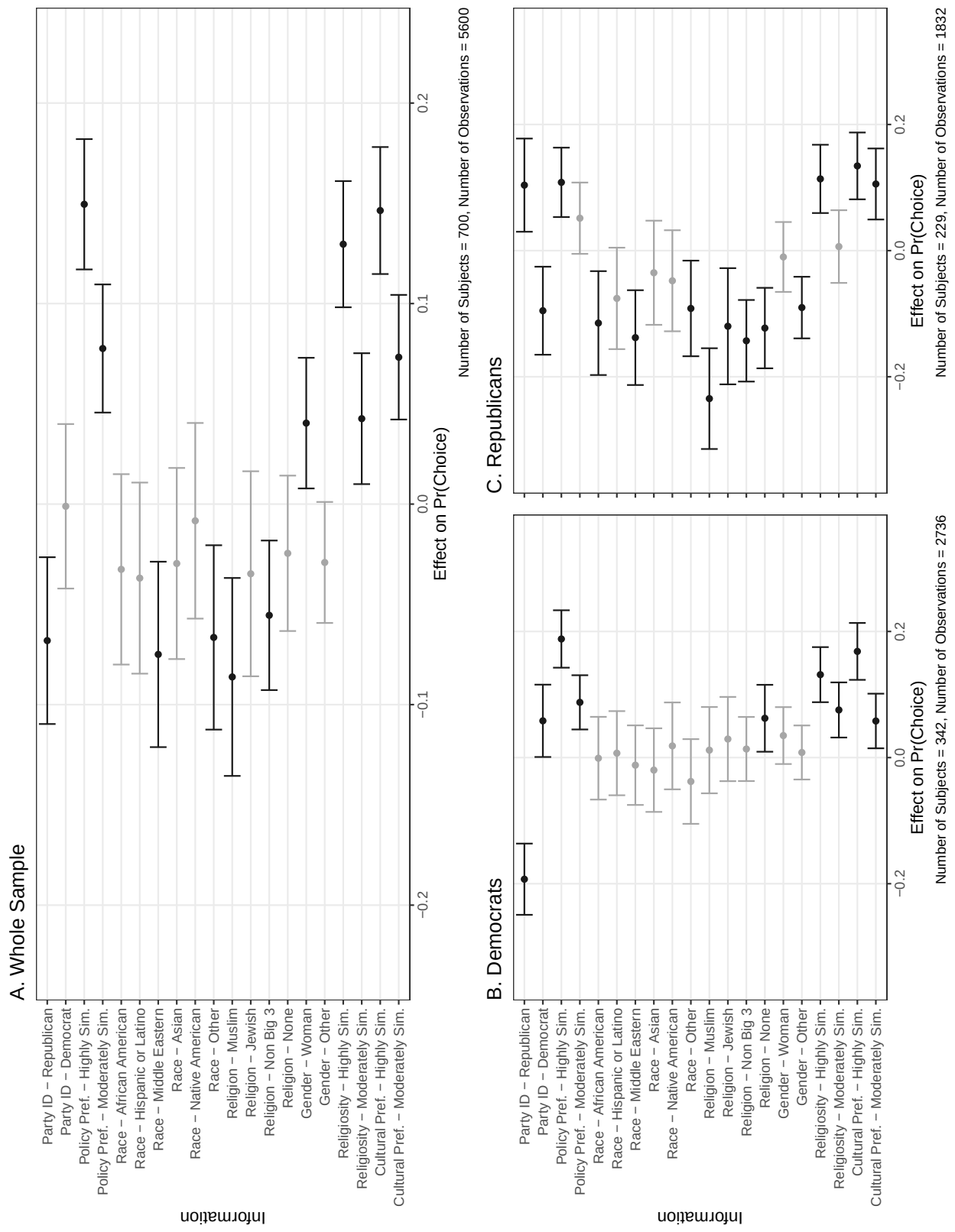

Figure 2: Estimated effects for each piece of information included in the complete profiles. Significant effects are darkened.

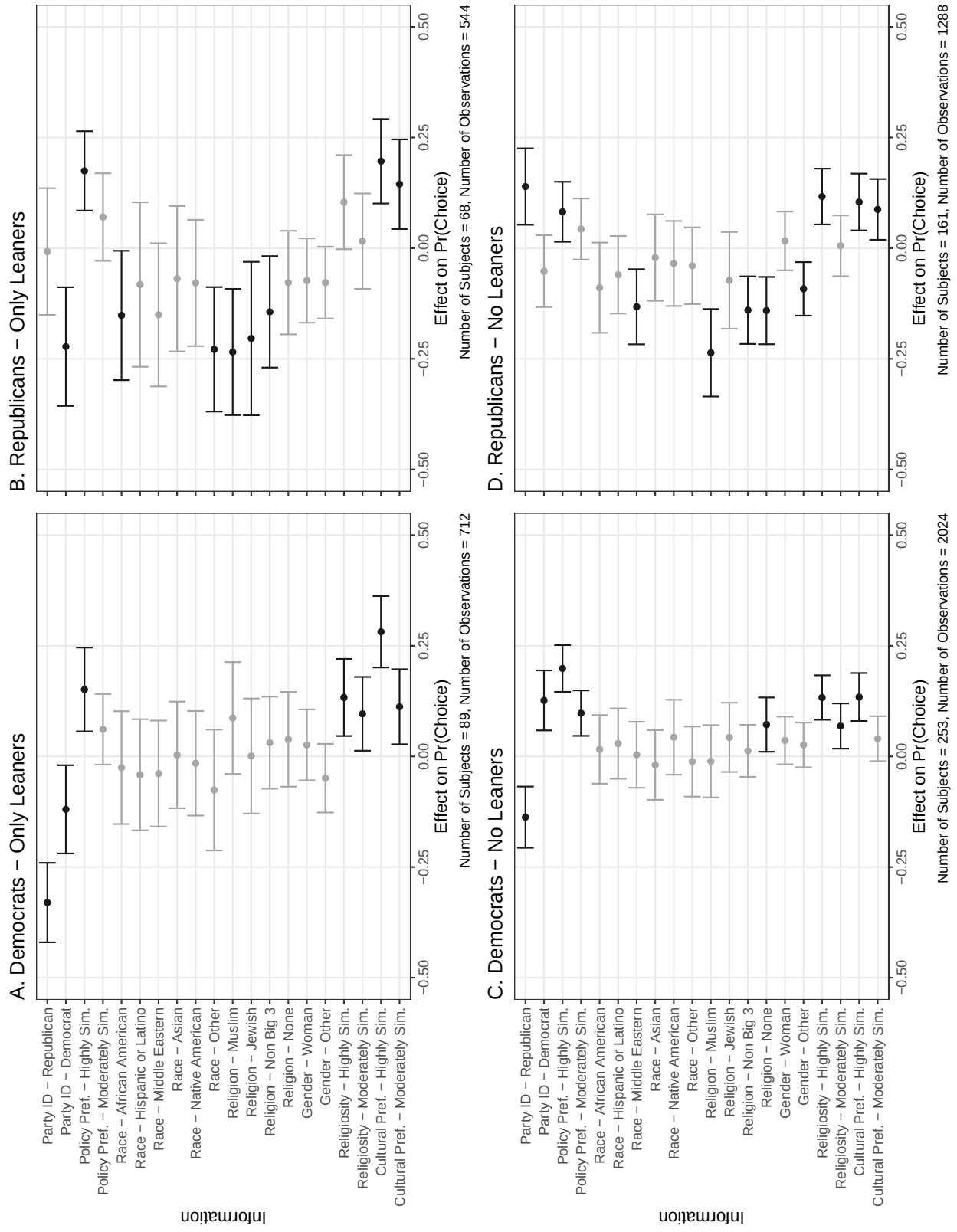

Figure 3: Estimated effects for each piece of information included in the complete profiles, broken down by party and strength of partisanship. Significant effects are darkened.