

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND
RATIONAL JUDGMENT ON THE LEVEL OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY**

by

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A Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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March, 2020

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March 2020

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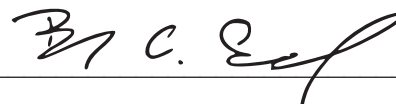
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Abstract

For decades, social and political scientists have been studying the effects of rationality on reasoning and the principles that are likely to impede progress toward improving rational and logical thinking (Pham, 2007; Vlaev, King, Dolan, & Darzi, 2016). Rationality is the predominant model of judgment in political and cognitive science (Simon, 1990; Westen, Weinberger, & Bradley, 2007). The rationality model indicates that individuals are rational, but there are limits imposed by cognition (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013; Westen, Blagrove, Harenski, Kilts, & Hamann, 2006). To date, rational judgment among individuals who embrace political affiliations at a high level remains unknown. The present research examined the curvilinear relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment with respect to personal and social responsibilities among individuals aged 18 and older who have completed at least some type of college. Furthermore, it explored whether there were distinctions concerning the reasoning or thinking of this population based on age. The results indicated a significant inverted U-shaped relationship between political affiliation and worrying ($p = .001$). There were significant linear relationships of political affiliation with rigidity, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility ($p < .001$). However, there was no significant relationship between political affiliation and the need for approval. Additionally, age did not significantly moderate the relationship between political affiliation and rational judgment with respect to personal and social responsibilities. Although this study failed to reject the null hypotheses, the overarching goal of the dissertation was to determine whether certain emotional states impact irrational approaches in terms of choices. The addition of more participants in future studies is warranted to explore other cognition aspects such as differences in opinion when it comes to age and the impact of the factor motivation on the decision-making process.

Dedication

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my family members. My family deserves much gratitude. I dedicate this work to my parents and my sister, Mr. Pereira de Oliveira, Mrs. Nautilha de Oliveira, and Fabiola de Oliveira, for their endless support during the entire process of accomplishing this greatest achievement, and to my daughter, Sophie Ericson, and my husband, Owen Ericson, for their kindness and selflessness in understanding the moments when my education should have been a priority.

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I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Laurie Slifka, who provided valuable guidance, helpful editing, stimulated the most profound insights and critical thinking, and the committee members, Dr. Rita Westermann-Bolton and Dr. Lori Daniels who supported my scholarly efforts throughout my dissertation.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	6
List of Tables	10
List of Figures	11
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	12
Introduction to the Study	12
Background of the Study	15
Statement of the Problem	16
Purpose of the Study	18
Rationale	19
Research Questions and Hypotheses	21
Nature of the Study	23
Significance of the Study	24
Definition of Terms	25
Assumptions and Limitations	27
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	29
Introduction	29
Theoretical Orientation for the Study	29
Dependent Variable(s)	42
Independent Variable(s)	41
Relationship Between Variables	43
Gap and Transition to Your Study	44
Summary	49

	8
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY	51
Introduction	51
Purpose of the Study	52
Research Questions and Hypotheses	52
Research Design	55
Sampling Design	56
Measures	58
Data Collection	63
Data Analysis	68
Expected Findings	72
Ethical Considerations	74
CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	76
Introduction	76
Description of the Sample	78
Summary of the Results	93
Details of Analysis and Results	82
Conclusion	93
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	95
Introduction	95
Summary of the Results	95
Discussion of the Results	101
Discussion of the Conclusions	105
Limitations	107

	9
Recommendations for Future Research	108
Conclusion	110
REFERENCES	116

List of Tables

Table 1. Reasons for Participant Data Removal	81
Table 2. Demographics Characteristics	82
Table 3. Sample Political Affiliation and Rational Judgment Scores	83
Table 4. Regression Table of ICS Toward IBI Worrying	84
Table 5. Regression Table of ICS Toward IBI Rigidity	86
Table 6. Regression Table of ICS Toward IBI Need for Approval	87
Table 7. Regression Table of ICS Toward IBI Problem Avoidance	89
Table 8. Regression Table of ICS Toward IBI Emotional Irresponsibility	90

List of Figures

Figure 1. The Relationship between the Total ICS and Worrying	85
Figure 2. The Relationship between the Total ICS and Rigidity	86
Figure 3. The Relationship between the Total ICS and Need for Approval	88
Figure 4. The Relationship between the Total ICS and Problem Avoidance	89
Figure 5. The Relationship between the Total ICS and Emotional Irresponsibility	91
Figure 6. Ideological Consistency Scale (ICS)	113
Figure 7. Irrational Beliefs Inventory (IBI)	114

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the present study and provides contextual information for the research questions. The present study intended to explore the relationship between political convictions or affiliations and personal and social responsibilities through rationality. There are a significant number of studies that have investigated how individuals act, for example, with respect to whether they are engaged in their political party or not (Brader, 2006; Cho, 2013; Parker & Isbell, 2010), the presence of emotions or internal regulations (Small & Lerner, 2008; Tooby & Cosmides, 2008), and whether emotional appeals interfere in voters' interactions when they talk about their political ideologies or vote for their political party (Brader, 2006; Ridout & Searles, 2011; Schoellhammer, 2015; Small & Lerner, 2008). Previous research has solely focused on the emotional aspects involving voters and politics. It is relevant to mention that rationality is the predominant model of judgment in political and cognitive science (Simon, 1990; Westen et al., 2006). The rationality model indicates that individuals are rational, but there are limits imposed by cognition (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013; Westen et al., 2007). However, the rational judgment of individuals who embrace political affiliations at a high level is currently unknown.

The present study outlines the level of political participation of the individuals who self-identified as liberal or conservative as well as the persons who do not have a political party. The dissertation further discusses the misconception that concedes the act of voting as merely a rational act, which has been supported in previous studies (Brader, 2006; Burden & Klobstad, 2005; Clore, 2011; Koger & Winter, 2010; Kollmuss & Agyman, 2002; Maroney, 2009; Marcus, Neumann, & MacKuen, 2000; Opatow & Weiss, 2000; Schmidt, Inti, & Testa, 2010).

Furthermore, classifying the individuals by party indicated whether the two predominant parties

had more ascendancy over their supporters when it comes to ideological influences. In order to support this proposition, the study examined the emotional and cognitive appeals that tend to influence voters' decisions and actions when it comes to decision-making. Finally, the study tested the second hypothesis examining the effect of the variable age on the curvilinear relationship between the two variables. The overarching goal of the dissertation was to determine whether certain emotional states and age impact the behaviors and attitudes of the voters revealing irrational approaches in terms of choices.

The present study examined the principles of the rational choice theory as the predominant paradigm to justify the factors included in the decisions (i.e., costs and benefits), superficially discuss the brain region that is activated as a key-proposition (e.g., cognitive, biological, environmental), and explore the inconsistencies in human behaviors (Lovett, 2006). The researcher used the cognitive emotional theory to describe how the areas of the brain respond to certain situations (Brader, 2006; Damasio, 2002). The goal was to study the magnitude of the determinants of attitudes and political behaviors connecting the influence of the political parties as a group, the decision-making process, and the future consequences of the lack of rationality. For instance, it is possible that embracing political beliefs at a high level is significantly related to irrational judgments.

Chapter 2 presents theoretical information focused on the quality of the political judgment (i.e., rational or irrational bases) and on the motivated reasoning, such as the emotions and cognitive processes involved. In order to evaluate and corroborate this aspect, multiple theories were explored such as political motivation theory, judgment, moral, and social acceptance theories. The present study examined the connection between emotions affecting rationality when it comes to political decisions, using the following studies for the theoretical

framework: Baumeister et al., 2007; Blais & Rubenson, 2012; Cabanac et al., 2002; Clore, 2011; Clore & Huntsinger, 2007; Haidt, 2001; Marcos, 2002; Ochsner et al., 2002; Ochsner & Gross, 2008; Sengupta, 2007; Wilson & Gilbert, 2008.

Politics is a topic that is extensively explored by the media and by scholars (Schudson, 2002; Zuniga, Nakwon, & Valenzuela, 2012). The current study proposes that there is a significant difference between the perspective of each political field, but there are indications that the parties have been focusing on the same goal. For example, it has been a daily routine for liberals and republicans alike to offer information concerning which side is winning the dominance in the government. The subjects that the political parties argue over primarily involve social responsibility. This is one factor that promotes disagreements between individuals who identify as liberal or conservative (Iyer et al., 2012). The present study explores topics such as immigration, strict laws, homeland security, patriotism, welfare benefits, and constitutional rights. It investigates the notion that the self-label between liberals and conservatives becomes more evident than the desire to reach convergent opinions on what is right for the population. The primary objective of the study was to reveal the potential close relationship between illogical and emotional approaches and the ability to make productive judgments. The incapability to using rational judgment might result in negative understanding when it comes to personal and social responsibilities.

Jost et al. (2003) and Jost et al. (2007) concluded that there are considerable neurological dissimilarities associated with holding a conservative or liberal ideology. Moreover, some researchers have also used methods from cognitive neuroscience to determine the mechanisms involved in behavior and political cognition (Cacioppo & Visser, 2003; Lieberman, Schreiber, & Oschsner, 2003; Theodoridis & Jost, 2012). Thus, there are mechanisms that motivate voters or

persons to sympathize with a certain political party (Aron, Robbins, & Poldrack, 2004; Harmon-Jones, 2003). The present study explores the opinions of voters concerning the government interferences, such as benefits for the poor, military actions, environmental laws, and corporation profits as well as social matters involving discrimination against African Americans, immigrants, and homosexual subjects. It also explores which specific party tends to be less rational, and which party has more voters who embrace the ideologies of their political party at a high level. It also explores which specific party tends to be more rational, and which party has more voters who embrace the ideologies of their political party at a high level.

Previous research has examined the increased participation of youths in political activities who are demanding a voice in decisions that affect their lives (Bakler & De Vreese, 2011; Ginwright & James, 2012; Zukin et al., 2006; Keeter et al., 2002). Although there is more youth participation in politics, the number of young individuals registered to vote has not increased. The turnout of individuals between 18 to 29 years old is lower than other age brackets when it comes to voting in elections (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Furthermore, scholarly articles have also focused on the power of social media regarding the increased engagement of the youth in politics (Bakler & De Vreese, 2011; Montgomery & Xenos, 2008; Valenzuela, Arriagada, & Scherman, 2012). Moreover, studies have also been conducted concerning the use of the Internet by the youth connected with topics such as political activism, globalization of the resources, and opposition leaders (Lim, 2012).

Background of the Study

For decades, social and political scientists have been studying the effects of rationality on the reasoning and principles that are likely to impede progress toward improving rational and logical thinking (Lovett, 2006; Pham, 2007; Vlaev et al., 2016). Rationality is the predominant

model of judgment in political and cognitive science (Simon, 1990; Westen et al., 2006). The rationality model indicates that individuals are rational, but there are limits imposed by cognition (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013; Westen et al., 2006; Westen et al., 2001). In the last decade, advances in the science of emotions have led to a paradigm shift in terms of decision theories (Phelps, Lempert, & Sokol-Hessner, 2010). Significant changes in the science of emotion have emerged, revealing that emotion constitutes an influential factor and might be a harmful or beneficial driver when it comes to decision-making (Lerner, Li, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015). Relevant patterns in terms of emotional behavior might influence judgments (Clore & Huntsinger, 2007; Lerner et al., 2015; Winkielman et al., 2007). However, the relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rational judgment is unknown. The present study examines the relationship between political affiliation and rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities. Specifically, it explores the influence of the high level of political affiliation on reasoning and whether there are differences concerning the reasoning of college students who show excessive political affiliation when forming judgments based on demographic factors (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, sex).

Statement of the Problem

The objective of this study is to test these variables to determine the relationship between political affiliation and rationality concerning personal and social responsibilities, exploring the influence of the high level of political affiliation on decision-making. Furthermore, the study examines the influence of the demographics such as age on this relationship by utilizing quantitative research design and methodology to emphasize objectivity and quantification of the occurrences through numerical representations and statistical methods to examine the data that was gathered (Wisdom et al., 2012).

The dissertation examines the curvilinear relationship between neglecting rational judgment due to a high level of political affiliation regarding personal and social responsibilities, considering the demographic variable age. The goal was to verify whether the results corroborated those of the previous studies. When it comes to the relationship between age and politics, there are controversies concerning younger voters and their ability to participate in politics more effectively than older voters. For instance, effective voting occurs when a citizen has the motivation and ability to produce positive consequences for the quality of democracy (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006; Hart & Atkins, 2011), and there is little evidence showing that younger voters (i.e., aged 16 to 18 years old) are less motivated to effectively participate in politics (Wagner, Johann, & Kritzing, 2012). On the other hand, studies developed in Europe revealed that young individuals are less likely to participate in elections (Fieldhouse, Tranmert, & Rursell, 2007). Wagner et al. (2012) studied the quality of the participation of voters aged 16 from Austria. The research did not reveal a significant difference pertaining to a better power of discerning and judging of the older voters. Furthermore, the authors recommended that positive outcomes associated with the capabilities of young individuals must be empirically studied for further clarification (Wagner et al., 2012). Therefore, Austria and some other European countries have lowered the minimum voting age to 16 (Wagner et al., 2012; Morgan, 2008; Donny & Doyle, 2008).

In the US, the gallop poll divulged a 35-percentage point increase in youth's voting intention (Gallop, 2018). Hart and Atkins (2011) suggested that development is not a factor that interferes with voting responsibly. It is relevant to consider that literature offers a substantial number of argumentations displaying that citizens under 18 years old are more likely to live with parents, which might potentially lead to distinct socialization impacts at the time of the elections

(Highton & Wolffinger, 2001). However, some studies revealed a lack of participation in the election regardless of the gap between ages (Root & Kennedy, 2011). In this context, one of the purposes of this dissertation is to determine whether older voters make more rational decisions than younger voters concerning personal and social responsibilities.

The theoretical framework of this proposal was based on the interactions between emotion, cognition, and age. The primary theories to be utilized are the cognitive emotion and intelligence theories, rationality theories, political motivation and evolutionary theories, moral judgment theory, and social acceptance theory. There is substantial evidence showing the connection between emotion and cognition (Brader, Marcus, & Miller, 2011; Small & Lerner, 2008; Tooby & Cosmides, 2008; Valentino et al., 2011), and emotional appeals are the focus of politics around the world (Brader, 2006; Brader & Corrigan, 2006; Parker & Isbell, 2010; Schnur, 2007; Wallance, 2016; Warren, 2016; Valentino et al., 2011). There are numerous articles demonstrating the strategic use of emotion in a political campaign to reach certain goals. Classical theories offer the support that candidates need to be successful against the competition. Researchers have explored the intrinsic relationship between mindset, emotion, and rationality and the consequence of this interaction on decision-making (De Sousa, 1990; Evans & Cruse, 2004; Wallance, 2016; Wenstop, 2005). This dissertation intends to demonstrate the unproductive relationship that occurs as a person refrains from using rationality when devoting themselves to a political party focusing on the topics of personal and social responsibilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to address the gaps in the literature concerning the relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rational judgment. It aims to specifically investigate the importance of focusing on the influence of the level of political

affiliation on the rational judgment of the individuals in the social structure involving concepts related to personal and social responsibilities in society. Understanding the relationship between these variables might provide crucial insights concerning how college students, who excessively embrace the ideologies of any political party, make judgments related to personal and social responsibilities in modern society.

Rationale

The objective of the present study is to explore the rational judgment of college students or of individuals who have completed some type of college concerning personal and social responsibilities versus the potential damages caused by a high level of political affiliation. It was hypothesized that such engagement promotes a lack of rationality when making decisions. The current research revealed that emotion denotes significant participation in politics when it comes to the actions of citizens. People tend disregard rationality and reasoning, which leads passion to take over whether the setting is a televised debate or a dinnertime argument (Brader & Corrigan, 2006; Brader & Marcus, 2013; Buck, 2014; Landsbaum, 2015; Marcus, 2010; Redlawsk, Civettini, & Lau, 2007). A study indicated that the more emotional individuals get when politics topics are brought up, the less likely they are to logically justify their behaviors, attitudes, and the ideals they are embracing (Cho, 2013; Landsbaum, 2015; Lau & Redlawsk, 2006; Marcus, 2010).

Landsbaum (2015) studied and conducted experiments regarding political parties and the involvement of adult individuals with pertinent ideologies and demonstrated that participants who experienced a strong physiological response when the logo of their political party appeared in a scene tended to report that they agreed with the proposals presented by that particular party without questioning their rationale. That is, the respondents irrationally and mindlessly agreed to

the proposals put forward by their political party (Landsbaum, 2015; Ridout, & Searles, 2011; Schnur, 2007; Valentino et al., 2011; Warren, 2016). Researchers have stated that once emotional ties are established in the mind of a voter, they are difficult to modify (Brader, 2006; Valentino et al., 2011). Testing personal opinion is a good way to increase the cognitive efforts involved in decision-making. For instance, if a person must justify their political choice, they should rely on reason over emotion to make a decision regarding the topic of discussion (Cho, 2013; Landsbaum, 2015; Lau & Redlawsk, 2006).

The political typology methods covered in previous studies were designed to explore the intraparty schisms and to illustrate the differences within each coalition. They differ in terms of participation in politics and in other aspects of the life of the Americans (White, 2006). The primary goal of researchers has been to investigate the political segments based on combinations of values and beliefs as well as political orientations. Both party groups share a distinctly critical view of government regulations (Parker & Isbell, 2010; Redlawsk et al., 2007). For instance, conservatives believe that the economic system must be fair. Conversely, liberals present strongly negative views concerning how the capitalist economy is prejudicial to society in general (Redlawsk et al., 2007). This study hypothesized that although liberals and conservatives are equally likely to express their interest in politics, the political activism over the past year has been more concerned with defending beliefs than caring for the subjects that matter to the country. It appears that there is a lack of interest in studying the potential consequences of excessively embracing a political party regarding social and personal responsibilities.

The intensive political engagement of youth in political activities has increased over the last few years, however, young individuals are not officially voting (Lopez & Flores, 2016).

Furthermore, there are significantly more youth engaging in political typology groups (White,

2006). Although young adults tend to claim that they want to have a say in the way the country is run, when motivated to participate in an activity for productive political movement, they do not turn thoughts and ideas into actions (Lopez & Flores, 2016; Mchugh, 2006). Motivational factors might be inducing political participation of the youth, but they do not seem to be entirely effective.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In the following section, the study introduces the variables that correspond to subscales of the IBI (i.e., worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, emotional irresponsibility).

Primary Research Questions

RQ1. Is there a significant relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rational judgment of the liberal and conservative college students concerning personal and social responsibilities?

H1_{0a}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and worrying

H1_{1a}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and worrying with higher levels of worrying toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0b}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rigidity

H1_{1b}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rigidity with higher levels of rigidity toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0c}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance

H1_{1c}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance with higher levels of rigidity toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0d}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and need for approval

H1_{1d}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance with higher levels of need for approval toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0e}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and emotional irresponsibility

H1_{1e}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance with higher levels of emotional irresponsibility toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

RQ2. Does the age of liberal and conservative college students who demonstrate a high level of political affiliation influence their rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities?

H2_{0a}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and worrying

H2_{1a}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and worrying

H2_{0b}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rigidity

H2_{1b}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rigidity

H2_{0c}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance

H2_{1c}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance

H2_{0d}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and need for approval

H2_{1d}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and need for approval

H2_{0e}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and emotional irresponsibility

H2_{1e}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and emotional irresponsibility

Nature of the Study

The researcher utilized a quantitative methodology for this study. The purpose of selecting this type of investigation was to emphasize objectivity and quantification of the observable occurrences through numerical representations and statistical methods to examine the data gathered (Wisdom et al., 2012). Validated surveys were used to determine the extent to which the participants tend to show conservative or liberal tendency and to measure irrational beliefs and thinking. The ICS was used to appraise the liberal or conservative ideologies across a

range of political value magnitude (Pew Research Center, 2014), and the IBI was used to measure the irrational beliefs, self-defeating beliefs, and irrational thinking (Koopmans et al., 1994; Bridges & Sanderman, 2002; Bridges & Sanderman, 2004; Du Plessis, Moller, & Steel, 2004). This inventory was also used to test the dependent variables of the research (DV - Rational Judgment) and the scale was used to measure the independent variable (IV – High Level of Political Judgment).

Significance of the Study

There has been an outpouring of psychological research investigating the relationship between political ideology and cognition, effect, behavior, and/or biology in recent years (Burden & Kloffstad, 2005; Jamtoy, 2012; Jost & Amodio, 2012). These research studies have focused primarily on describing and comparing the personality and/or the biological traits of the voters, despite the scientific community's awareness of the effects of ideological conflicts on social consequences that involve individuals from both types of political parties (Amodio et al., 2007; Everett, 2013; Freedman, 2006; Jost & Amodio, 2012; Kanai, Feilden, & Rees, 2011). Although the examination of the personality and ideology of the individuals has undoubtedly been the crucial aspect of most research (Jost & Amodio, 2012), there is a lack of research evaluating the extent to which the college students who embrace the conservative or liberal political tendency are rational (i.e., worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, emotional responsibility). The present proposal argues that coherent political participation might constitute exercising rational thinking when judging and making decisions regarding personal and social responsibilities.

Social responsibility is one of the factors that promotes disagreements between liberal and conservative individuals (Iyer et al., 2012). Demonstrating political competence and practice

should involve the harmonious combination of reason and opinion, that is, rational understanding (Clare, 2011; Maroney, 2009). Irrational political perspectives among individuals might generate incoherent implications regarding social responsibilities. According to Collins (1994), “social stability is necessary for a strong society, and adequate socialization and social integration are necessary for social stability” (Collins, 1994, p. 181). Although the current study failed to reject the null hypotheses, data provided significant evidence to conclude that it introduces a new approach that motivates college students and older adults to develop rational thinking skills to generate coherent decisions.

Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions clarify the concepts by stating what the researcher administered to measure each nomenclature related to the construct (Bordens & Abbott, 2014). These definitions will help comprehend the behaviors clearly and unambiguously (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The descriptions of liberal and conservative views that Everett (2013) mentioned in his research (i.e., SECS – The 12 Items Social and Economic Conservative Scale) corroborate the items included in the ICS.

Political affiliation: The ICS measured the independent variable (e.g., Excessive Political Affiliation). The participant indicated a liberal or conservative political view or whether they have a neutral tendency about the issue included in each item of the questionnaire (Pew Research, 2014).

Political tendency: The responses indicated a tendency toward liberal or conservative premises, or a moderate tendency of the participant based on their responses toward the range of specific issues mentioned in the questionnaires, which are validated classifications.

Liberal: Higher tolerance of ambiguity and complexity and greater openness to new experiences (Everett, 2013).

Conservative: Individual with needs for order, structure, closure, certainty, dogmatism, and discipline (Everett, 2013).

Neutral: The individual checked the option “DK” (Do Not Know) when providing their responses.

Social responsibility: Ethical framework and moral motivation concerning assistance to others (Hironimus-Wendt & Wallace, 2009).

High level of political affiliation: This is the independent variable (IV) of the dissertation. Political relates to the government involved in politics and especially political parties. Affiliation refers to the state of being closely associated with a particular group, party, company, or person (Langbert, 2018). The dissertation utilized the aforementioned variable when testing the hypotheses. The study defined a high level of political affiliation in a scale that ranges from High to Low, considering the moderate level.

Rational judgment: This is the dependent variable (DV) of the dissertation. The term rational refers to having the ability to reason (Westphal, 2012). Being rational means to be in a circumstance in which an individual uses thought processes to solve problems. Judgment is a term that refers to the process by which individuals make decisions and form conclusions according to the information received, experience, and mental activity. It develops with training, education, and experience, and helps a person select the best alternative in a situation (Westphal, 2012).

Political voice: The political voice has intrinsic and instrumental value (Menocal, 2014). It enables persons to pursue the aspirations they value and seek satisfaction or compensation from for what they consider damage (Menocal, 2014).

Effective voting: It occurs when a citizen has motivation and ability to produce positive consequences for the quality of democracy (Lau & Redlawsk, 2006).

Ethnicity: According to Banton (2007) and James (2015), *ethnicity* is a conceptualization of a shared culture which is reflected in practices, beliefs, and values (e.g., religion, language, cuisine, art, music, vestment).

Race: Banton (2007) and James (2015) state that *race* refers to a group of persons who have distinctions and similarities socially significant when it comes to physiological attributes (e.g., Black, White, Yellow, Red).

Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher has been diligent to ensure that the present research study avoids impacts or influences on the interpretation of the findings. However, there were limitations that are inherent to this type of research. For instance, the survey was conducted online. Although the use of online surveys is increasing, there are still a few concerns. The highest risk associated with online research is to confidentiality, that is if the research discloses private and identifiable information outside of the research context. The ethical principles of the Belmont Report and the Federal regulations concerning the risk and privacy of the respondents might be affected if the study is conducted online (Vollmer & Howard, 2010). In order to minimize related interferences, the study used the appropriated technology and the norms surrounding the process (i.e., assessing anonymity, keeping privacy, and minimizing the risks). The risk associated with the research participation was minimal due to the nature of the questions in the instruments which do not

include sensitive topics. In regard to privacy, the survey was anonymous. Self-report surveys have multiple advantages, but they suffer from disadvantages associated with the behaviors of the respondents. For instance, the survey might contain exaggerated answers and social desirability bias (Heppner et al., 2016). Therefore, the questions of the survey were short and clear to minimize desirability bias. With regard to the exaggeration factor, it was part of the research purpose to study the variance between levels of response (e.g., high, low, moderate). Moreover, it was expected that respondents will show their pride for their political party, that is, individuals should respond based on how they feel (i.e., experience) about each topic.

The present study utilized a research population of college students or individuals who have completed at least some type of college, and they were randomly sampled from the process. The use of college populations tends to limit the research when it comes to generalization (Seddon & Scheepers, 2012). However, this study intended to investigate this population intentionally. It is intriguing that even presenting an increased interest for political affairs, the participation of the youth is not expanding in terms of voting (Election Polls, 2018). Therefore, the aim of this study was also to verify where American citizens and residents stand in terms of political participation. Furthermore, the researcher also offered recommendations for future research. The suggestions were linked to the limitations of the study or to any remaining gaps in the literature not addressed in this dissertation. Even though the researcher predicted limitations, but they limitations did not inhibit effective interpretation of the results.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter introduced the study, establishing context and providing background information and current knowledge of whether or not neglecting rationality due to extreme political convictions impedes judgments regarding personal and social responsibilities. This chapter summarizes the existing research on emotion, cognition, and rationality. Gaps in the existing literature have also been discussed. This discussion supports the need for the current study. The theoretical information in this literature review focuses on the quality of the political judgment (i.e., rational or irrational bases) and on the motivated reasoning (i.e., emotions, cognitive processes, demographics influences, paradigms, and dissonances involved). This discussion demonstrates the relationships of mechanisms associated with judgment and decision-making, behavior, personality, and evolutionary psychology, suggesting that individuals tend to agree with the policies supported by their political party even when the policy is irrational.

Theoretical Orientation for the Study

Cognitive Emotion Theory

The most popular definition of emotion describes it as a specific type of mental or physiological constitution that the brain accesses when responding to a situation or an object related to the individual's particular goal (Brader, 2006). The elements of emotions are divided into arousal and valence. Arousal makes a person ready to respond and valence represents the outside world signal that induces negative or positive feelings in a person (Brader, 2006). It is crucial to remember that feelings are the experiences of the emotions (Damasio, 2002). On the other hand, cognition includes thoughts and beliefs (Brader, 2006). When it comes to definition, it is an expansive topic. A more general definition links emotion as part of cognition. Thus, scholars define high-reasoning functions being the cognitive activities independent of the

emotions (Brader, 2006). Cognitive processing differs from emotional processing because cognition is linked to thinking while emotion is related to feeling (Brader, 2006).

Researchers have concluded that when it comes to regulation of emotions, there is an interdependent situation. That is, emotion regulates cognition and vice versa, considering the influence of the type of thinking that a person develops (Clore & Huntsinger, 2007). Politicians are aware of these principles that affect the voters' emotions (Sengupta, 2007). They might thus frame their ideologies to intensify the emotions that motivate voters so that they vote in the desired manner. The intensity of the emotion depends on the value given to the sociopolitical topic which turns the topic itself into something powerful (Wilson & Gilbert, 2008). These are topics that lead to many arguments between scholars and critics (Brader, 2006; Marcos, 2002). Critics and scholars question the negativity of emotions becoming part of political decisions. In his article named *The Sentimental Citizen*, Marcos (2002) argues that emotion should be excluded from any judgment options on subjects that involve politics. This dissertation was focused on the emotion regulations referred to as appraisal and reappraisal, predicting irrational alterations due to the influence of the political parties along the process.

Research has showed that emotion regulates specific acts of the individuals by stimulating conscious thoughts and allows the interference of beliefs related to the intentions of other individuals (Baumeister et al., 2007). Researchers have agreed that emotions actually help because they promote a variety of thoughts upon which individuals act. However, studies have demonstrated evidence linking cognition and emotion, showing the difficulties that a person might face in applying the use of cognitive control when they are experiencing phases of anxiety or depression, for example, which make them vulnerable (Clore, 2011). Ochsner and Gross (2008) have illustrated studies on cognitive emotion regulation showing how functional imaging

might be linked to behavioral analyses because of contribution to the multilevel model of emotion. The model describes the relationship between the emotions and the neural systems that are implicated in the control of emotions (Ochsner & Gross, 2008). This conclusion is evidenced at a neurological level and showed that viewing disturbing images reduced the activities of the amygdala (Ochsner, Bunge, & Gross, 2002).

Jost and colleagues (2003) and Jost et al. (2007) concluded that there are considerable neurological dissimilarities associated with holding a conservative or liberal ideology. Researchers have used methods from cognitive neuroscience to determine the mechanisms involved in behavior and political cognition (Cacioppo & Visser, 2003; Lieberman et al., 2003; Theodoridis & Jost, 2011). The findings have indicated that the dimensions of political cognition might be related to different parts of the brain activity, which might be revealed by the elements found between political orientation and the statements elaborated by voters or people who sympathize with each political party (Aron, 2004; Harmon-Jones, 2003).

Decades of studies have brought evidence showing that the public opinion is in fact shaped by moods (Brader, 2006). Certain characteristics of the society are based on the interests of the media. The media uses techniques to make news more exciting or to provoke aversion: trends within politics relate to the emotional aspects of political communication. The use of emotional appeal seems to be effective because it induces fear or enthusiasm (Marcus et al., 2000). According to Grabe and Bucy (2009), one of the bases of that statement is the automaticity of the brain regarding the process that evokes feelings immediately. It is crucial to mention the influence of the imagination during this process. It refers to the ability to imagine specific circumstances affecting the emotional moment. The use of emotions is crucial to obtain a desired political involvement such as trust and credibility. When discussing emotions, findings

revealed considerable data showing the visual mode as one of the routes of communication (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). During campaigns, politicians engage in a significant number of visual framings to promote the qualities they intend to show, which are the qualities desired in a candidate (Marcus et al., 2000).

Theory of Political Motivation

The political motivation theory refers to the study of behaviors and attitudes directed toward political topics, describing acts and interests of the individuals involving government or political parties (Deci, & Ryan, 2002; Druckman & Lepper, 2012). Social cognition is not influenced by emotions only. Jost and Amadio (2012) studied the influential aspects related to the ideology that serves as a potential motivational force. From a psychological perspective, there is a plan involving individuals with specific skills who play according to a set of rules, usually for the amusement of the spectators or even for their amusement. According to the authors, this involves atrocities and acts of generosity executed in the name of belief systems and is ultimately connected with human motivation.

Studies have suggested that the ideology of a person might be associated with a strong motivational factor. However, that does not mean that ideology is motivated by the same psychological need (Jost & Amadio, 2007). Thus, this dissertation proposes that the motivational social cognition system alone is not the only factor that leads a person to believe and engage with a specific political party. This premise finds support in the work of Caprara & Zimbardo (2004); Carney et al., (2008), Gerber & Huber (2009); Mondak (2010). The dissertation proposal emphasized that multiple theoretical bases might justify the level of affiliation (e.g., excessive affiliation), the choices involved in political tendency (e.g., liberal, conservative), and personal judgments (e.g., rational, irrational). This study failed to reject the null hypotheses; however, it

reported significant evidence associated with emotional process, social cognition, decision-making, behavior, and political and ideological concepts.

Theory of Moral Judgment

This dissertation proposes that the study of political affiliation should include not only individual processing but also social influence when it comes to rational judgment. People access their thought processes routinely to verify whether they result in logical thoughts or decisions (Clore, 2011), that is, cases in which the actions regulate thought via deliberative thoughts (e.g., automatic, unconscious). This process involves the domain of moral judgment, which is when one defines what is good or bad, ethical or unethical (Clore, 2011). Haidt (2001) investigated the role of emotion in moral judgment. He did not fully support the stage-like development of children's reasoning as proposed by Piaget. In contrast, he stated that moral judgments reflect an evolved moral intuition and that individuals judge events using rationalizations to make sense (Haidt, 2001). Clore (2011) suggested that individuals who act rationally minimize costs and increase benefits. However, moral reasoning is based on emotional reactions (Clore, 2011). This happens because the chances of becoming emotional increase during the process (Clore, 2011). Decision-making solutions should work on guiding the individual to balance the cost against benefits to maximize their happiness (Blais & Rubenson, 2012). However, the environments might cause information overload leading to incoherent decision-making. The process of deciding involves the attempt to select the better choice among the alternatives available. Those options tend to be considered over and over when none of the possibilities evoke either positive effects (Cabanac et al., 2002) or experiences associated with cognitive fluency (Oppenheimer, 2008).

Social Acceptance Theory

There are more considerations regarding the products of thoughts (Clore, 2011). According to Clore (2011), thought processes are known to be unconscious, emotional, heuristic, and automatic. The logical coherence of the beliefs is an important element that needs to be included when analyzing the results and products of the act of thinking. The reactions of a person may express the same clearly, showing that the reaction that humans have in specific situations involve the use of rationality or social acceptance. People tend to criticize those who are illogical or even inconsistent in their actions. On the other hand, when people notice that their action is illogical, a feeling of embarrassment arises, motivating them to rethink their position. Therefore, emotions might impose standards of reason (Clore, 2011).

Individuals care about the consistency and logic of their beliefs and acts, which is a widely discussed topic in psychological cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Chapanis & Chapanis, 2017). Relevant studies have revealed that when a person acts inconsistently with their beliefs, a tension or cognitive dissonance emerges motivating an adjustment consistent with their behaviors. This process is named dissonance reduction (Chapanis & Chapanis, 2017).

Rationality and Self-perception Theories

In accordance with the domains associated with affection, there is the self-perception theory. According to Rabok, Ward, and Ostolozza (2005), this theory refers to the idea that individuals build their attitude by observing their own compartments. It proposes that persons induce each attitude without using internal cognition associated with reasoning concerning. In compartment rationality, a person attempts to explain the behaviors of other individuals (Rabok et al., 2005).

Local rationality refers to the human tendency to contextualize inferences (Vlaev, 2018). For instance, individuals tend to form opinions based on their context and locality. This rationality reflects a basic element related to human cognition involving judgment and decision-making. The view proposes that humans can make sense of and maintain consistency in terms of their beliefs, the world, and their comportment (Chatern & Loewensteing, 2015). When there is a conflict between comportment and beliefs, humans often adjust their beliefs and attitude, that is, they attempt to ensure consistency with the comportment (Burger, 1999; Festinger, 1957). To maintain consistency, the cognitive system follows rational principles (Simon, 1959; Simon, 1992; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011; Morewedge & Kahneman, 2010).

The consistency of a mental elaboration is considered local, which implies that the information obtained is limited by memory and motivation (Simon, 1959; Simon, 1992; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011; Morewedge & Kahneman, 2010). The interpretation of the subject is not considered locally when a person integrates evidence generated from other similar circumstances. These similar processes typically occur in an affective domain. A person who attempts to maintain consistent behavior does not always count on their mental processes only. There are times when the addition of information from affective situations takes place (Wilson et al., 2000). The proposal predicted the action of external influences during mental elaborations.

Rational Choice Theory

This research proposal considers the fact that personal interests might affect the voters' decisions. The rational choice theory and cognitive dissonance indicate that persons might make sagacious decisions that are more likely to generate a higher amount of conveniences (Lovett, 2006). Studies have determined that rational understanding and rational behavior relate to the rational decision-making abilities of an individual (Maroney, 2009). There is a consensus in the

literatures regarding decision-making that includes the necessary steps to reach a rational decision (e.g., building block rationality). This model of human rationality offers concepts such as understanding, reasoning, perception, and choice (Maroney, 2009). A severe cognitive or emotional disorder might put the competence factor at risk. Individuals with severe psychosis tend to display a distorted perceptual process and understanding. Furthermore, severe depression affects the patients leading them not to care about their future, not being capable of grasping the facts accurately (Maroney, 2009).

It is crucial to consider that emotions influence personal relevance. Therefore, it tends to shape the goals and motivations of individuals (Maroney, 2009). Emotion influences the understanding process, specifically the appraisal and appreciation that concern awareness of personal significance. Appraisal is a judgment that shapes information processing. Emotion significance relates to the act of appreciating or not appreciating a situation (Maroney, 2009; Schmidt et al., 2010). This explanation reveals that a disturbance or an emotion might work as a natural threat to rationality in terms of perception and information processing, determining the level of competence of the individual (Maroney, 2009). This dissertation explores the important implications of the decision-making process of individuals who are mentally capable but still make poor choices.

Dual Processes and Rational Choice Models

Psychology scholars tend to find the term rationality ambiguous (Clore, 2011). Rationality refers to an understanding of the thought processes and describes how persons think rather than prescribing the way they should think. In order to reach that goal, researchers have developed the dual processes of thought. The processes of thinking include controlled versus automatic processing, heuristic processing versus systematic, or ruled-based versus associative

processing (Clore, 2011). Scholars have studied these possibilities concluding that individuals do not think rationally on a daily basis. Zajone (1980) and Wilson (2002) stated that human thoughts are typically not rational due to unconsciousness and emotionality (Zajone, 1980; Wilson, 2002). It is notable that this same statement has been presented in different articles over the years.

Voters are individuals who live in a society that requires social contributions in terms of responsibilities (Marcos, 2002). The rational choice models explain that a person reasons using heuristics or using any easy way to a solution they find available (Clore, 2011). People tend to overestimate probability when they hear about accidents that happened around them or that were part of their reality at a certain point. This type of reasoning might lead to errors. The primary question should be whether judgment heuristics are harmful or not to a group or society (Clore, 2011). Heuristics is a mental procedure that allows individuals to judge and solve problems quickly and at the same time efficiently (Battersby, 2016).

Cognitive Schema and Affective Intelligence Theories

The cognitive schema implies that people process information stored in a dissimilar scheme, which structures their thoughts (Damasio, 2002). Neuroscience contributions emphasize that there are close relations between the cognition and rationality and that they involve emotions (Damasio, 2002). The theory of affective intelligence posits that the emotion of a person is the consequence of a pre-conscious process that involves appraisal, and that appraisal shapes the choices and acts of voters (Marcus et al., 2000).

Party Identification, Evolutionary, and Behavioral Theories

The theory of party identification is a more contemporary theory that posits that the affective orientation of a person relates to their essential group in their environment (Burden &

Klofstad, 2005). The theory refers to a psychological attachment, a bond that is emotional. This relation associates with the sense of being part of an organization (e.g., group, society). The principles of this theory reveal the identification aspects that retain individuals in the same group. When examining political party identification, it is recommended to ask participants to report the political party they identify with (e.g., liberal, conservative). Furthermore, emotional elements must be considered. The party identification theory emphasizes the importance of studying the feelings instead of the thoughts of the participants. It appears that respondents might be sensitive to the wording used in an instrument that measures political identification, which could lead to a significant change in terms of responses and types of attitudes (Burden & Klofstad, 2005).

Kemmelmeier (2008) formulated the hypothesis that investigates whether an individual's choice of identification (i.e., to be liberal or conservative) is associated with their cognitive sources. The study endorsed the correlations between ideology and personality characteristics (Kemmelmeier, 2008). In political science, it is essential to understand the behaviors of voters (Brader, 2006). Studies of the field often demonstrate that there is an evaluation with regard to the cost-benefit of the actions of voters when they select what they believe to be the best way to achieve their goal (Brader, 2006). Another perspective is more focused not on the behavior but the group identity. That is, emotional connection is associated with the process of socialization (Brader, 2006). Both studies explored the topics linking political choice and participation, however, they did not explain how emotion works in political communication.

The social cognition theories may determine the basis for the explanation of social behaviors (Koger & Winter, 2010). Cognitive elements are components of the social territory or condition where the respondent belongs or lives. That is, what a person thinks concerning the

region in which they are located might impact their efforts. However, it is important to acknowledge how each individual's brain processes information. This situation may reflect the will to participate or not in social actions that might help the environment. For instance, there will always be a group of individuals who express opinions in favor of recycling. On the other hand, there will be others who might firmly believe that it is not a major concern. This example may also be correlated with evolutionary theory that explains the gains and costs that influence personal decisions based on social beliefs and judgments (Koger & Winter, 2010).

When forming opinions, individuals do not make judgments coherently (Opatow & Weiss, 2000). The theory of false consensus and the theory of the false uniqueness describe the path through which humans evaluate items, make comparisons, and mention the level of confidence they have in that regard. Studies have shown why people overestimate or underestimate certain social causes (Tanner & Jungbluth, 2003). One of the proposed justifications that provide the basis for such behaviors is defense mechanism, which allows individuals to rationalize their behavior focusing on self-protection. Such an attitude brings about a possible denial of self-involvement when a person minimizes the severity of an outcome, which damages the possibilities of contributing to society instead of merely taking advantages of what the society offers. Furthermore, researchers have also noted the importance of becoming aware of the use of denial and fostering benefits for all (Opatow & Weiss, 2000).

Another dissertation explored the dominant social paradigm to briefly explain the system in which some individuals believe that they have the right to use world resources for personal gain (Schultz et al., 2007). Evidence from social norms research has revealed that it is possible to predict which direction certain people would go to or choose in general terms (Schultz et al., 2007). Decisions are not always made based on one's perception and beliefs. Research on

theories that consider attitudes and persuasion have pointed out that values precede behaviors (McGuinness, Jones, & Cole, 1977; Gamba & Oskomp, 1994; McKenzie, Mohr, & Oskomp, 1995), with the results revealing that a favorable attitude regarding a specific party will likely lead to a vote for the candidate who represents that political party. The principles of the theory of Skinner criticize efforts arguing that instead of ignoring the forces that promote shame when a person does not vote for their party, the groups should focus on the benefits that the party might bring when defending specific subjects, such as eco-friendly lifestyle (Skinner, 1987). The subjects and theories discussed in this chapter demonstrated compelling information concerning emotional cognition and decision-making in society. The lack of rational decisions when it comes to social responsibilities might lead to a noncontributing involvement that is negative for the society (Kollmuss & Agyman, 2002) because it might be focused on personal gain and ideologies.

This dissertation intended to provide reasonable data that corroborate the hypotheses showing that excessive attachment to a political party impedes the use of rationality when judging and making decisions in terms of personal and social responsibilities. Other than the theories mentioned in this chapter, the social cognitive theory of personality contributed explanations about the self-process determining how humans usually function and process topics related to political and social matters (Chen et al., 2014; Dalton & Russel, 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Druckman & Lepper, 2012).

Despite the extensive number of theories explored by scholars currently, explaining the multiple phenomena of political compartments and the concepts associated with socio-emotional cognition and rationality are scarce. The differences in mechanisms providing describing whether political norms influence behavior or vice versa are still unclear (Blais & Rubenson,

2012; Deci et al., 2002; Deci & Ryan, 2002). Although a persistent search for recent sources to provide the basis for this dissertation, it was difficult to select contemporary studies that impartially discussed my key topics. It was notable that most researchers have utilized their personal values and political tendency while investigating the materials. It appears that new research is more concerned about the investigation and criticism of ideologies and preferences rather than the observation of the behaviors and the attitudes behind the same.

Variables

The variables of this dissertation were values from the field of emotion, cognition, and rationality that indicated that emotions are the preeminent operators of meaningful decisions in politics (Elkman, 2007; Gilbert, 2006; Keltner & Lerner, 2010; Coughan & Comolly, 2001; Mellers, 2000). A hypothesis was proposed that affiliating to a political party at a high level might positively impact rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities. The following section presents the variables and related theoretical framework.

Independent Variable

The independent variable (IV) of the study is excessive political affiliation.

Factors: liberal and conservative

Levels: Age

Selecting a party to engaged with is not only a decision process but also involves channels such as action tendencies toward others or actions that pull away from others (Faucher & Tappolet, 2008). These characteristics of emotions and cognitions define the political tendencies of the voter. Emotions serve as a system to inform a person about situations and motivate them to take action and make choices (Ridderinkhof, 2017). Emotions affect the level

of the emotional responses (Englis, 1994). The nature of the party system (e.g., participation, support) might influence the levels of political orientation (Druckman & Lepper, 2012).

Dependent Variable

The DV of the study is rational judgment.

According to Clore (1994) and Petegens and Verstuyb (2014), there is a significant relationship between emotion and rational reasoning. A primary function of emotion is to offer explanations of how a situation has been appraised (Clore, 1994; Petegens & Verstuyb, 2014). It works as information for a judgment and reorders the priorities implicated in a circumstance. For instance, emotion contributes to rationality by hierarchically organizing the goals into planning based on personal choices (Damasio, 2002). Emotions help an individual to act by feeling and by emotional force. Thus, they allow sufficient attention when planning future goals (Ainslie, 2001). Furthermore, choice situations might lead to irrational behavior (Ainslie, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 2002).

There are paradoxes of rationality, such as The Prisoner's Dilemma in which a dominant strategy provides greater payoff regardless of what the other party does (Peterson, 2014). This dilemma is a simple example that shows that two rational individuals sometimes might not cooperate even in cases that involve the best interests of both. Betraying a partner might offer a greater reward than cooperating. That is, pursuing individual reward leads prisoners to behave toward one another (Peterson, 2014). The other paradox is the Paradox Hedonism, and it is associated with the act of selecting the most pleasurable option in all personal choice circumstances. This offers a life circumstance with less overall pleasure and various difficulties in terms of cooperation, commitment, and collective action (Dietiz, 2010).

Researchers argue that emotions might assist the paradoxes of rationality (Elstir, 2000). They are mechanisms that lead individuals to act irrationally, but in a way that makes them feel better. Evolution has provided humans peculiar cognitive power and capabilities for responding to challenges (Levensonn, 1994). Rational persons who use their self-control well seek revenge when the reputational gain outweighs the present cost of their action. In this circumstance, individuals prioritize caring for their reputation and not worrying about what that might cost. However, gains from reputation come further ahead while the costs occur immediately (Frank, 1988; Printz, 2004). Greene and Haidt (2002) have pointed out that emotion arises from judgment, which is a type of emotion that shapes decision-making.

Evidence has shown that a critical area of the brain integrates emotion with cognition (Bechara, 1999). For example, Forgan (1995) introduced an effect infusion model that impacts social judgment. The model presumes that the level of effect added to the judgment would vary along the process. Most likely, the effect impacts judgment in complex circumstances (Forgan, 1995). The appraisal theories associate the appraisal process with emotions to differentiate judgment and to select outcomes. The approach predicts that emotion of the same capacity might produce dissimilar effects on choices and judgments. On the other hand, an emotion with an opposite power might exert influences that are similar (Keltner & Lerner, 2010). Emotions assist the individuals in terms of navigating social decisions (Keltner et al., 2014).

Variables Relationships

This research examines the relationship between two variables: high level of political affiliation (IV) and rational judgment (DV) on the personal and social responsibilities. As a secondary hypothesis, findings revealed that age did not moderate the relationship between variables. The purpose of this dissertation was to address the gaps in the literature concerning the

relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment on personal and social responsibilities. Understanding the relationship between these variables could provide crucial information concerning how college students, who excessively embrace the ideologies of any political party, make judgments related to their personal and social responsibilities in the modern society.

The ICS is a measurement of political value dimensions (Pew Research, 2014). It was used measure the constructs associated with the independent variable (IV: excessive political affiliation). The research utilized this validated scale to determine the extent to which the participants tend to be inclined toward a conservative or liberal perspective. The IBI measures irrational beliefs, self-defeating beliefs, and irrational beliefs (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002; Bridges & Sanderman, 2004; Du Plessis, Moller, & Steel, 2004; Koopmans, Sanderman, Timmerman, & Emmelkamp, 1994). The inventory measured the dependent variable of the dissertation (DV - rational judgment).

There has been an outpouring of psychological research investigating the relationship between political ideology and cognition, affect, behavior, and biology in the recent years (Burden & Klofstad, 2005; Jamtoy, 2012; Jost & Amodio, 2012). These researches focused primarily on describing and comparing the personality and/or the biological traits of the voters despite the scientific community's awareness of the effects of ideological conflicts on social consequences that involve individuals from both types of political parties (Amodio et al., 2007; Everett, 2013; Freedon, 2006; Jost & Amodio, 2012; Kanai, Feilden, & Rees, 2011). Although the examination of the personality and ideology of the individuals is undoubtedly a crucial area of research (Jost & Amodio, 2012), there is a lack of research evaluating how rational are the college students who embrace the conservative or liberal political tendency with respect to

personal and social responsibilities (i.e., worrying; rigidity; problem avoidance; need for approval; emotional responsibility). The basis of the present dissertation proposed that coherent political participation could have constituted the exercise of rational thinking when judging and making decisions regarding personal and social responsibilities.

Social responsibility is one factor that promotes disagreements between individuals who identify as liberal or conservative (Iyer et al., 2012). Demonstrating political competence and practice should entail a harmonious combination of reason and opinion, which gives meaning to a rational understanding (Clare, 2011; Maroney, 2009). Irrational political perspectives among individuals might generate incoherent implications regarding personal and social responsibilities. According to Collins (1994), a “social stability is necessary for a strong society, and adequate socialization and social integration are necessary for social stability” (p. 181).

Age is an essential element to consider when exploring the level of political association in the individuals, and the role of both these factors on the level of personal and social responsibility (Burden & Klobstad, 2005; Jost & Amodio, 2012). This demographic characteristic of individuals is a relevant variable to consider for a meaningful interpretation of the results (Bordens & Abbott, 2014). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), combinations involving the variable age are often utilized to define subgroups and to evaluate predictions of the features that are correlated with the outcome. Although not reaching favorable results, this research collected significant data to conclude that it is productive in introducing a new approach that motivates individuals 18 years old or older to develop rational thinking skills that generate coherent decisions in terms of social responsibilities.

Measures

The dissertation utilized the ICS and The IBI for the study.

The Ideological Consistency Scale (ICS) by Pew Research Center

The ICS contains 10 questions asked on the Pew Research Center surveys to appraise the extent to which persons offer liberal or conservative perspectives across a range of political value magnitude. The scale measures the growing relationships over time. The individual items in the scale are discussed below. The top part of the survey indicates the long-term trends on the items, and Section 1 tracks the partisan divisions on each question (Pew Research Center, 2014).

On the surveys, the individual questions were recoded as follows: -1 for a liberal response, +1 for a conservative response, and 0 for other responses (e.g., don't know, refused, volunteered). As a result, scores on the full scale range from -10 (i.e., liberal responses to all 10 questions) to +10 (i.e., conservative responses to all 10 questions). Scores may further be divided into five categories: Consistently conservative (+7 to +10); mostly conservative (+3 to +6); mixed (-2 to +2); primarily liberal (-6 to -3); and consistently liberal (-10 to -7).

In order to put these scores in perspective, a respondent choosing five liberal and five conservative views or six of one and four of the other would be considered as having mixed ideological views (Pew Research Center, 2014). A person who selects seven conservative and three liberal responses or eight and two would be considered mostly conservative. Any respondent choosing nine conservative responses and one liberal response, or all ten conservatives would be considered consistently conservative. Since some people do not answer every item, other combinations are also possible (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The graphics in the ideological consistency section and the engagement section utilize the full set of points on the scale (i.e., graphics in the ideological consistency section have uniform consistency by showing the average of two consecutive points on the scale). Any ideological index has its limitations because describing what it means to be liberal and conservative is

controversial (Pew Research Center, 2014). American political thinking is multidimensional, and an effort to even out ideology to a single “left” or “right” dimension may lead to the omission of important aspects. However, the purpose of the scale is to explore the concept of ideological consistency sharing the American liberal or conservative view across a range of dimensions of beliefs (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The focus of the scale was to determine the changes in the participants’ responses over time (Pew Research Center, 2014). Therefore, the researchers were limited to a set of items that were invented 20 years ago, which had certain imperfections (Pew Research Center, 2014). For example, the elements of the index do not cover the recent value divides, such as surveillance or terrorism. In addition, while the range of the scale (i.e., from -10, all liberal responses, to +10, all conservative responses) remains the same, values throughout the time of the study and the focus of the American public does shift. In 2014, the mean on the scale was -0.6 slightly to the left. In 1994, the mean score was slight to the right (+0.6). This shift shows that an overall modification occurred in large social groups tending to the left on two issues: immigration and homosexuality (Pew Research Center, 2014).

This overall transformation does not imply that the average American tends to be more liberal than conservative because the mean is currently less than zero. However, it indicates that persons on the liberal end of the scale are now closer to the center of the scale than those at the conservative end. Consequently, the sizes of the consistently liberal and consistently conservative groups are not strictly comparable (Pew Research Center, 2014). Due to the construction of the scale, the authors would not conclude that there are more consistent liberals than consistent conservatives currently. Thus, changes over time (i.e., the increase in the proportion who are consistently liberal or conservative and the dissimilarities in attitudes and

behaviors across groups) are robust even when alternative determinations that account for the scaling differences are used (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The Irrational Beliefs Inventory (IBI)

The present study utilized the IBI to measure irrational beliefs. The IBI is a 50-item self-report inventory developed by Koopmans, Sanderman, Timmerman, and Emmelkamp (1994) in the Netherlands. It measures self-defeating beliefs (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002) and irrational beliefs as conceptualized in the theory postulated by Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Du Plessis, Moller, and Steel, 2004). The scale was developed for the assessment of irrational thinking (Bridges & Sanderman, 2004). The dissertation utilized the validated North American version, which is the Pew Research Center survey.

The IBI contains five factors: worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, and emotional irresponsibility (Koopmans et al., 1994). The Rational Behavior Inventory (RBI) and the Irrational Beliefs Test (IBT) generated the IBI. In general terms, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy is an evidence-based action-directed approach to psychotherapy that relies on an empirically well-established knowledge base and periodic evaluations of the clients' progress (Ellis, 1962). Albert Ellis created the approach and made observations stating that humans fear things that are not present and that might never even turn into an actual experience (Ellis, 1962). This characteristic contrasts with animals, which only demonstrate stress in the presence of a clear threat (Ellis, 1962). Another essential assumption of REBT is that an interaction occurs between the perception of the person regarding the events and their psychological well-being. Thoughts might impact self-perceptions and lead people to alter the framework of their way of thinking (Ellis, 1962). As a consequence, in times of distress, a person might suffer and learn self-defeating styles of thinking distinguished by psychological distress. The fundamental

concept is that the REBT framework is the construct of irrational beliefs (Ellis, 1962). In Ellis's conceptualization, irrational beliefs are not simple psychological disturbances but illogical or dogmatic beliefs that profoundly hold appraisals through social conditioning and emotionally oriented reasoning, causing emotional disturbances when life experiences collide with those beliefs (Ellis, 1962).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher explored the variables, the measures, and the theories that form the theoretical framework for this dissertation. In order to study the level of political affiliation and its relationship with rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities, the present dissertation primarily considered the topics emotion, cognition, and rationality involving decision-making and judgment. Emotion plays a crucial role in decision-making (Wranik, Barret, & Salovey, 2006). Researchers have stated that the traditional view of emotion affirming that this it has a disruptive effect on rationality was replaced because there are few theories corroborating the same (Wranik et al., 2006). On the expected findings section of Chapter 3 of this study, the author has argued the aforementioned statements, and in Chapter 4, the details of analysis have been combined with the results that might establish that emotion has a relevant impact on the decisions of voters when it comes to personal and social responsibilities.

The researcher expected to reject the null hypothesis revealing that high level of political affiliation (IV) correlates with lack of rational judgment (DV). Findings could corroborate the theories that demonstrate a significant correlation between emotional excess and irrational decision-making. Moreover, the author questioned the limited number of recent studies on this matter by introducing and presenting strong relationships between the topics. The discussion displayed the importance of considering emotion, cognition, age influence, and aspects of

rationality for exploring correlated theoretical framework. The next chapter will introduce the purpose of the study, the methodology, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The present research examines whether failure to make a rational judgment due to the demonstration of a high level of political affiliation might influence decisions concerning personal and social responsibilities with respect to age. The previous chapters introduced the research questions, hypotheses, variables, the significance of the study, and the theoretical orientation for the basis to the study. The study focuses on the level of political participation and judgment exercised by individuals in the social structure, involving concepts related to social responsibility in society. The instruments measured opinions regarding social (e.g., welfare, immigration, military actions) and personal (e.g., fear, immorality, personal responsibilities) issues. Investigating these opinions was helpful for comprehending the relationship between variables, which provided crucial information concerning how individuals who have or are enrolled in postsecondary education excessively embrace the ideologies of any political party and make judgments related to each of those topics, respectively.

This study defined and established the procedures and concepts prior to its commencement, thereby allowing a replica. SurveyMonkey was used to collect data from individuals between the ages of 18 and older. The age limitation was selected based on the report that most undergraduate students in the United States are within this age range (Schanzenbach, Bauer, & Breitwieser, 2017). The Psychological Research on the Net (Online Research Alliance), sponsored by the Department of Psychology of Hanover College was also used to provide the link to these two host websites for potential participants who were willing to take the survey. Other social media were utilized such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp to contact potential respondents. These social media were used to introduce the SurveyMonkey

and the Psychological Research on the Net links inviting individuals to participate in the research.

The research minimized error and bias regarding data collection and analysis (Wisdom et al., 2012). The IBI was used to collect information related to the level of irrationality and provided data associated with the irrational beliefs that the participants endorsed. The ICS was used appraise the extent to which persons offered liberal or conservative perspectives views (Koopmans et al., 1994; Pew Research Center, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to address the gaps in the literature concerning the relationship between potential high-level political affiliation and rational judgment. Specifically, the focusing was on the level of political participation and judgment of individuals in the social structure, involving the study of the concepts related to personal and social responsibilities in society. Understanding the relationship between these variables would provide crucial information concerning how college students or individuals who have postsecondary education and who excessively embrace the ideologies of any political party make judgments related to personal and social responsibilities in the modern society.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Primary Research Questions

RQ1. Is there a significant relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rational judgment of the liberal and conservative college students concerning personal and social responsibilities?

H1_{0a}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying.

H1_{1a}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying with higher levels of worrying toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center.

H1_{0b}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Rigidity.

H1_{1b}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rigidity with higher levels of *Rigidity* toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center.

H1_{0c}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance.

H1_{1c}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance with higher levels of rigidity toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center.

H1_{0d}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Need for Approval.

H1_{1d}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance with higher levels of Need for Approval toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center.

H1_{0e}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Emotional Irresponsibility.

H1_{1e}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance with higher levels of Emotional Irresponsibility toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center.

RQ2. Does the age of liberal and conservative college students who demonstrate a high level of political affiliation influence rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities?

H2_{0a}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying.

H2_{1a}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying.

H2_{0b}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Rigidity.

H2_{1b}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Rigidity.

H2_{0c}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance.

H2_{1c}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance.

H2_{0d}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Need for Approval.

H2_{1d}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Need for Approval.

H2_{0e}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Emotional Irresponsibility.

H2_{1e}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Emotional Irresponsibility.

Research Design

The following section contains the description of the participants, the recruitment methods, and the procedures followed for data analysis. The sample size determination for adequate power is included below.

Setting

An online survey was used to collect data because the population is geographically dispersed, covering a large area. This new form of research offers respondents more privacy than in a face-to-face setting when it comes to how each respondent shares context, which influences on the performance (Olson & Olson, 2000). According to Szolnoki and Hoffman (2013), the primary advantages of online surveys are cost, accuracy, and efficiency. One-one-one interviews pose disadvantages such as cost (e.g., personal costs), quality of data (i.e., the ability of the interviewer, if using multiple helpers; there are interviewers who might have bias that might impact the way they input the responses), manual data entry (i.e., prolong the analysis process), and limited sample size. Moreover, online surveys make questionnaires available wherever the participant are and also reduces human error (i.e., survey administrator).

Population

The research population included Americans citizens, non-Americans, voters, and nonvoters who live in the United States. Voter registration information was not collected. The focus of the research was to verify whether excessive political tendency and rational judgment are correlated regardless of the registration status of the participant. The demographics survey contained boxes in which participants checked characteristics, such as age, race, ethnicity, and sex. The description of each characteristic of the population is elucidated below.

Sample

The study sample included men and women, undergraduate students aged 18 or older who have completed some type of college. The demographic questionnaire was included to acquire following information: Race (e.g., White, African American, Native American, Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, Latino, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Indo, Other); *other* represented any other race not significantly distributed in the US: Ethnicity (e.g., American, Canadian, European, Scandinavian, Central America, South American, African countries, Asian countries, Middle Easterner, India, Other); *other* represented any other race not significantly distributed in the US.

Recruitment

Standardized scales were used to preserve the validity and reliability of the instruments. The study addressed the research questions by surveying a representative number of participants. The demographic variable age provided additional information of the participants to examine the joint effects of this variable and political affiliation on the DV rational judgment. Analyses were conducted to examine the possibility of a curvilinear relationship between high level of political affiliation and rational judgment between college students and individuals who had completed at least some type of college concerning personal and social responsibilities. Furthermore, the study explored whether curvilinear relationships were moderated by the demographic factor age. The findings have been projected objectively, in a succinct format using graphs, tables, charts, and other non-textual elements to assist the reader. Non-textual means were utilized to supplement the overall presentation of the findings and to explain essential points. The steps reported in the last two paragraphs are based on the studies of Bordens and Abbott (2013), Pallant (2013), and Trochim (2006).

The research utilized two online software to recruit participants via online solicitations. The first option was SurveyMonkey and the second was Psychological Research on the Net (Online Research Alliance). The Psychological Research on the Net was sponsored by the Department of Psychology of Hanover College. Social media provided the link of the SurveyMonkey website for potential participants who were willing to take the survey. Other social media was utilized such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp to gather potential respondents. These social media were used to introduce the SurveyMonkey link inviting persons to participate in research.

WhatsApp is a freeware and cross-platform messaging and voice IP service. It allows users to send text and voice messages makes video calls, and share videos and images, documents, user locations, and other media. The invitation was formatted to allow a possible re-distribution to friends or family members of the respondents. The requests asked the participant to provide informed consent and complete the survey on the designated website which was SurveyMonkey.

The informed consent discussed the voluntary participation and confidential nature of the survey. Participants were required to acknowledge and agree with the conditions of the electronic research method. Survey responses were then recorded in the Analyze Responses section of the researcher's account (American Psychological Association, 2002). The cloud-based survey offered similar advantages to Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI) systems in which the participation of the interviewer is not required. The software package allowed the creation of questionnaires such that the information was uploaded directly on a database. This technique enabled the researcher to manage the data collection setting more efficiently than executing a mailed survey (Chan et al., 2004). Once the instruments were approved by the IRB, the

researcher requested permission to be added in virtual political groups where a flyer was posted to invite potential participants. The researcher also sent invitations to contact lists via Facebook messenger and WhatsApp.

Measures

The following section contains the description of the data collection tools utilized to gather information used in this quantitative research.

The Ideological Consistency Scale (ICS)

The ICS contains 10 questions to appraise the extent to which people align with liberal or conservative perspectives across a range of political value magnitude. The individual items in the scale are displayed in Figure 6. This scale was selected because it gauges scores showing which individual presented more liberal or conservative views across a range of political value dimensions (Pew Research Center, 2014). It was a valuable instrument associating the opinion of the participants regarding diverse issues ranging from social safety to sexual preference and military strength. This ideological scale correlated traditional and liberal perspectives surrounding similar political topics. The original measure was constructed to evaluate the growing correlation change over time (Pew Research Center, 2014). In 2014, the mean on the scale was -0.6 slightly to the left. In 1994, the mean score was slight to the right (+0.6). This shift shows that an overall modification occurred in large social groups tending to the left on issues such as immigration and homosexuality (Pew Research Center, 2014). The ICS scale has indicated satisfactory internal consistency, construct validity, and sensitivity in previous studies (Emanuel-Zuurveen & Emmelkamp, 1996). The reliability index of the questionnaire indicated that the instrument is stable. According to Kline (2005), the less the random error, the more the raw score will represent the true score. The authors of the instrument calculated the

reliability of the tests (i.e., ratio of random error variance to total score variance) and also assessed the validity of the tests' scores.

The questions were recoded as follows: -1 for a liberal response, +1 for a conservative response, and 0 for other responses (e.g., don't know, refused, volunteered). As a result, scores on the full scale ranged from -10 (i.e., liberal responses to all 10 questions) to +10 (i.e., conservative responses to all 10 questions). The ranges are as follows: consistently conservative (+7 to +10); mostly conservative (+3 to +6); mixed (-2 to +2); primarily liberal (-6 to -3); and consistently liberal (-10 to -7). In order to put these amounts in perspective, a respondent choosing five liberal and five conservative views or six of one and four of the other was considered as having mixed ideological views. A person who selected seven conservative and three liberal responses or eight and two was considered mostly conservative. Any respondent choosing nine conservative responses and one liberal response, or all ten conservatives was considered consistently conservative. Since some individuals do not answer every item, other combinations are possible (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The graphics in the ideological consistency section and the engagement section utilized the full set of points on the scale (i.e., graphics in the ideological consistency section attained uniform consistency by showing the average of two consecutive points on the scale). Any ideological index has its limitations because describing what it means to be liberal and conservative is controversial (Pew Research Center, 2014). American political thought is multidimensional, and an effort to even out an ideology to a single left or right dimension might lead to the omission of the important aspects. However, the purpose of the scale was to explore the concept of ideological consistency sharing the American liberal or conservative views across

a range of dimensions of beliefs also named ideological constraint or ideological sorting by political scientists and other researchers (Pew Research Center, 2014).

This overall transformation does not mean that the average American tends to be more liberal than conservative because the mean is currently less than zero. However, it indicates that people on the liberal end of the scale are now closer to the center of the scale than those at the conservative end. Consequently, the sizes of the consistently liberal and consistently conservative groups are not strictly comparable (Pew Research Center, 2014). Due to the construction of the scale, the authors did not conclude that there are more consistent liberals than consistent conservatives currently. Thus, changes over time (i.e., the increase in the proportion who are consistently liberal or conservative and the dissimilarities in attitudes and behaviors across groups) are robust even when alternative determinations that account for the scaling differences are used (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The Irrational Beliefs Inventory (IBI)

The present study utilized the IBI to measure irrational beliefs. The IBI is a 50-item self-report measure of irrational beliefs, initially developed by Koopmans et al. (1994) in the Netherlands. It measures self-defeating beliefs (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002) and irrational beliefs as conceptualized in the theory postulated by Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Du Plessis et al., 2004). The scale was developed for the assessment of irrational thinking (Bridges & Sanderman, 2004). This dissertation will utilize the North American population-based validation (See Figure 7).

The IBI contains five factors: Worrying, Rigidity, Problem Avoidance, Need for Approval, and Emotional Irresponsibility (Koopmans et al., 1994). The RBI and the IBT generated the IBI. In general terms, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy is an evidence-based

action-directed approach to psychotherapy that relies on an empirically well-established knowledge base and periodic evaluations of the clients' progress (Ellis, 1962). Albert Ellis developed the approach and made observations stating that humans are capable of having *fear* of things that are not present and that might never even turn into an actual experience (1962). This characteristic contrasts with that of animals, which only demonstrate stress in the presence of a clear threat (Ellis, 1962). Another essential assumption of REBT is that an interaction occurs between an individual's perception of the events and their psychological well-being. Thoughts might impact self-perceptions and lead people to alter the framework of their way of thinking (Ellis, 1962). Consequently, in times of distress, a person might suffer and learn self-defeating styles of thinking distinguished by psychological distress. The fundamental concept in the REBT framework is the construct of irrational beliefs (Ellis, 1962). In Ellis's conceptualization, irrational beliefs are not simple psychological disturbances but illogical or dogmatic beliefs that profoundly hold appraisals through social conditioning and emotionally oriented reasoning, leading to emotional disturbances when life experiences collide with those beliefs (Ellis, 1962).

It is essential to examine whether the psychometric properties of the inventories are consistent across cultures (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002). In terms of internal consistency and independence of subscales of the IBI, the authors explored an ad hoc sample of white ($n = 100$, M Age = 21.3 yr., $SD = 4.0$) and black ($n = 82$, M Age = 19.8 yr., $SD = 2.2$) undergraduate South African college students. The researchers compared Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales and Pearson correlations between subscales for American and Dutch students with the same indicators for the South African students. The magnitude and rank order of Cronbach alpha as well as the correlations between subscales for the three groups demonstrated significant similarities. Indices of alpha for the black South African students were lower in magnitude on all

subscales than those for American, Dutch, and white South African participants. However, the intercorrelations between subscale scores were consistent (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002). The internal consistency for all the subscales in the questionnaires was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Overall, the internal consistency ranged from .73 to .84 for the US version. The item-to-total correlations tended to have a wider range in the US overall with the low end of the range slightly lower in the US, but the upper ranges similar across all subscales. Overall, the item-to-total correlations were acceptable (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002).

The original study was designed to assess the applicability of the IBI in a different cultural context (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002). The authors administered the English language version of the IBI to a non-clinical American sample of 248 undergraduate students (i.e., 143 females, 105 males, mean age 21.38 years old) and compared the results to the original data for 538 Dutch college students (i.e., 307 females, 227 males, 4 unknown, mean age 23 years old). The research examined two indices: (1) The internal consistency reliability of the five subscales were expressed in terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for both American and Dutch samples, and (2) the intercorrelations of the five subscales in both samples. The reliabilities for the subscales in the American and Dutch samples were of acceptable magnitudes, except one. The intercorrelations of the IBI revealed that the subscales were independent of each other in both English and Dutch language versions (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002).

This scale indicates satisfactory internal consistency, construct validity, and sensitivity (Emanuels-Zuurveen & Emmelkamp, 1996). Each item will be scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (i.e., strongly disagree) to 5 (i.e., strongly agree). A high score on this scale reflects higher irrationality. The total score was used to assess the level of irrationality, while the

five subscales provide information on the type of irrational beliefs that the participants endorsed (Nieuwenhuijsen et al., 2010).

Data Collection

The following section includes the required steps to conduct the survey online. Internal and external validity and the processes used to store data are also included below.

In order to use the instruments online, the researcher requested permission from the survey authors to utilize the surveys to collect data for the present study. Furthermore, the researcher submitted the research proposal to the IRB for approval. The cover letter survey informed the participants about the purpose of the study, expected duration, the right to decline participation, and the right to stop participating at any time. The respondent was informed about the confidentiality of the data and that all data will be destroyed three months after the end of the research. A contact email was provided to answer any other further questions. By submitting the cover letter survey, the participant denoted that they had read the specifications of the research if they were over 18 years old and that they agreed to the terms as described. By accepting the consent terms, the participant was granted the the first question of the survey. Declining the terms redirected the potential participant to the last page, the Thank You page. In such cases, the respondent was not allowed to read the items of the survey. After submitting the cover letter, the respondent was to click the Begin Survey button.

The software allowed the researcher to check the questionnaires after completion to identify missing or inconsistent data. Respondents were allowed to submit their surveys providing even with partial data. This procedure helped the researcher to verify biases in the sample and the dissimilarities between those who completed the survey and those who dropped out. According to Chan et al. (2004), response latencies, backing up, changed answers, or other

actions might be captured permitting a more productive analysis and interpretation of the process concerning the variations in its execution across individuals (Chan et al., 2004).

During this process, the researcher utilized Track Survey Responses to track how many individuals completed the first part (ICS) or the second part of the survey (IBI), clicked through, or responded to the complete survey. When the time for participation expired, the researcher exported the recipients' responses into a spreadsheet that collated all the information. The Excel spreadsheet was utilized to keep track of surveys that did not meet criteria (e.g., high school participants, respondents who live overseas, participants who do not have a postsecondary education nor are enrolled in one). The next step included the organization of the material, data analysis, interpretation, and communication of the results.

Internal and External Validity

Examining attitudes is distinctive and indispensable in social psychology (Bordens & Abbott, 2010). During the last presidential election in which a democrat candidate won, 74% of internet users relied on the use of virtual network to participate or obtain information related to election, and there was a significant increase of that use to obtain a political view. Survey research is highly viable, but researchers should know how to use questionnaires properly for useful results (Bordens & Abbott, 2011). The dissertation did not draw inferences from the surveys. Instead, the behaviors were measured utilizing a correlational research strategy. The instruments evaluated the relationships between specific attitudes surrounding political tendency and rational judgment that associates social and personal perspectives.

Both tests correspond to the same academic level of the participants. The research used correlation analysis to gauge the consistency of the scores to investigate whether the variables are correlated. The reliability index of the questionnaires indicated that the instruments are

stable. According to Kline (2005), the less the random error, the more the raw score will represent the true score. The authors of the instruments calculated the reliability of the tests (i.e., ratio of random error variance to total score variance). The authors also assessed the validity of the tests' scores. According to Kline (2005), validity is determined by verifying the utility of the test when predicting a criterion. The authors of the IBI and of the ICS made the effort to defend the internal structure of the tests' items. Kline recognized that there are biases that might affect the true score of a participant and that might occur when using a Likert-type scale, which is the scale that was utilized in both the surveys. The issue is associated with the extreme ends of the measures. Kline suggested ensuring that this problem is minimized by giving directions that encourage participants to use all options available in terms of responses. The selected questionnaires fulfill this requirement (Kline, 2005).

The reverse scoring technique was used in one of the surveys, which helped detect contradictions. Kline (2005) stated that respondents might be aware of potential social demands pertaining to the survey which might lead them to select socially acceptable responses. However, the advantage of using the referred instruments is that the research might recruit random individuals and the environment is neutral. Gregory (2013) made remarks regarding the influence of the environment on the responses of persons. The North American population-based validation of the IBI was utilized to ensure adequacy. The scale was considered appropriate to be used for both sexes (Khalaf et al., 2012). Summing across all items to provide a total score was found to be a general indicator of irrational thinking, and it is applicable in different cultural contexts (Abdallah, 1997; Alkhateeb, 2004; Bridges & Sanderman, 2002; Grubash & El-Rufaie, 2001). Regarding the age factor, the scale was used to estimate the irrational thinking of students

from 14 to 21 years of age. The instrument presented high internal consistency and a significant correlation which was found to be suitable for use (Abdallah, 1997).

The Ideological Consistency Scale was selected because it gauges the level to which individual offered more liberal or conservative views across a range of political value dimensions (Pew Research Center, 2014). It was be a valuable instrument associating the opinion of the participants regarding diverse issues that go from, for instance, social safety to sexual preference and military strength. This ideological scale correlated traditional and liberal perspectives surrounding similar political topics. The measure was constructed to evaluate growing correlation overtime (Pew Research Center 2014).

Storage and Protection of Data

The ethical principles articulated by the Belmont Report and the Federal regulations related to the protection of human beings depend upon concepts risk, expectations of privacy, pre-existing records, and identifiability whose meanings are affected when the study is conducted online (Vollmer & Howard, 2010). The consent form was required. The respondents in a subject pool must be advised of the components of the survey in which they participate (Bordens & Abbott, 2013). Conducting research online involves confidence regarding the methods that authors use, the technology, and the norms surrounding the process. (i.e., assessing anonymity, privacy, and risk). For instance, the concept of minimal risk depends on the risk associated with research participation and the risk involving their quotidian. The concept of privacy depends upon participants' expectations regarding people who can access information about them (Vollmer & Howard, 2010).

The study did not involve any identification either name or pseudonym. Determining whether an individual might be identified or not has implications for the participant in terms of

risks. The highest risk associated with online research refers to the confidentiality in case the research discloses private and identifiable information outside of the research context. In case of an online survey, the researcher might often reduce this type of risk by not asking for anonymous information or by registering personal identifiers separately from the research data. Therefore, even a small amount of information might lead to the identification of the respondent (Vollmer & Howard, 2010). A back-up copy of the acquired data was saved on the hard drive of the researcher's computer, which is password-protected and locks after five minutes of inactivity.

When it comes to the survey host, the security statement applies to the products, services, websites, and apps offered by Survey Money. In terms of physical security, SurveyMonkey information systems and technical infrastructure are hosted within System and Organization Controls 2 (SOC 2) accredited data centers. The security systems that control data centers include 24x7 monitoring, cameras, visitor logs, entry requirements, and cages for SurveyMonkey hardware. The hosts are compliant with Payment Card Industry's Data Security Standards and accept or process credit card information securely in accordance with these standards.

Technology resources are only permitted through secure connectivity (e.g., Virtual Privacy Network - VPN) and demands multi-factor authentication. The password policy requires complexity, expiration, and lockout and disallows reuse. Access is granted on the basis of reviews permissions is revoked immediately after employee termination. Background screening is used when hiring employees. Furthermore, the company maintains a documented vulnerability management program, which includes periodic scans, identification, and remediation of security vulnerabilities on servers, workstations, network equipment, and applications. All networks, including test and production environments, are regularly scanned using trusted third-party vendors. Critical patches are applied to servers on a priority basis and as appropriate for all other

patches. Survey Monkey encrypts data in transit using secure Transport Layer Security (TLS) cryptographic protocols.

In terms of anonymity, the survey creators decided to collect responses anonymously. All collectors allowed the survey creator to turn anonymous responses on or off. Collectors allow survey creator to track IP addresses. It was recommended to disclose the collection method in the introduction of the survey. Therefore, the company strives to ensure that user data is kept secured.

Data Analysis

The following section contains the demonstration of the processes used for the organization of raw data, preparation of data for analysis, management, and statistical analyses.

This study used quantitative research to collect and analyze data. The purpose of selecting this type of investigation was to emphasize objectivity and quantification of the observable occurrences by utilizing numerical representations and statistical methods to examine the data gathered (Wisdom et al., 2012). Five hierarchical linear regression models (i.e., one for each IBI subscale) were utilized to examine the possibility of curvilinear relationships between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment. Curvilinear relations between IV and DV were examined to identify predicted U-shaped relationships. The tail ends of excessive political affiliation measuring between -10 and +10 were associated with high scores related to the subscales worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, and emotional irresponsibility. A curvilinear regression was performed using linear and quadratic functions to identify a potential bend in the regression line. The variables were calculated to determine the presence of a curvilinear relationship, a quadratic term was computed by squaring total ICS score (See Table 3).

The statistical relationship between variables (i.e., IV - high level of political affiliation and DV - rational judgment) was examined and there was no manipulation of variables. It aimed to verify whether the relationship between these two variables reveals the fact that as one variable increases, the other variable decreases up to a certain point. After that mark, both variables should increase together yielding a U-shaped curve. Further, the present work hypothesized that the demographic *age* moderates the curvilinear high level of political affiliation and rational judgment relationship. By including college students and individuals who have completed at least some type of college, who live in the United States, the study examines whether there was a curvilinear relationship between the variables and the validity of moderation effects on this relationship. Implications of the study to theory and practice have been discussed.

The study collected information related to high level of political affiliation (IV) and rational judgment (DV) verifying the relationship between them, concerning personal and social responsibilities, and explored the demographic age. Conducting a quantitative research allowed the researcher to determine the relationships between the IV and DV subscales i.e., (1) Worrying, (2) Rigidity, (3) Problem, (4) Avoidance, (5) Need for Approval, and (6) Emotional Responsibility. The researcher used a descriptive design to build associations between the variables within the study framework, locate correlation, and compare groups and the relationships among them. This delineation allows a broader study involving a higher number of respondents and helps maximize the generalizability of the results (Bordens & Abbott, 2013; Pallant, 2013; Trochim, 2006).

Organizing Raw Data

The research utilized SurveyMonkey, which allowed the creation of the questionnaires such that the data was written directly to a database. This technique enabled the researcher to

manage the data collection setting more efficiently than executing a mailed survey. Once the instruments were organized and approved by the IRB, the survey was created on the SurveyMonkey website and made available for the respondents. The completed questionnaires were accessible to the researcher also powered by SurveyMonkey. Returned surveys were checked for completeness. Respondents were identified by an identification code, and the responses were registered by assigning numerical values for the data entry into the SPSS Statistical Package for analysis.

Preparation of Data for Analysis

Data was exported to the SPSS spreadsheet that contained the information ready for analysis. The information associated with missing or inconsistent data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate notes regarding missing data and for data to be removed due to not meeting all criteria. The next step included the organization of the material, analysis of the data, interpretation, and communication of the results.

Managing and Processing Data

After data were collected, careful procedures were considered regarding potential issues. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), there are relevant elements to be considered when cleaning up data prior to the analysis. For instance, there are concerns related to accuracy with which external factors might produce distorted correlations. Second, the researcher checked for missing data and then outliers. Therefore, inaccuracies of data were treated accordingly. Respondents who did not meet the criteria (e.g., missed any question, live outside USA, had high school as the highest level of education obtained) were removed from the dataset. This decision was to be made based on the primary purpose of the study, which was to identify and evaluate all relationships involving the independent variable and the DV along with the demographics.

Preliminary data analysis. After converting raw data into the SPSS software and downloading it into an Excel spreadsheet, the researcher checked for outliers by investigating a scatterplot (i.e., check for data points located very low or high and away from the main cluster of points; inspect the distribution of data points; and determine the direction of the variables). Moreover, data were screened to determine participants who had scores above or below 3 *SD* from the group mean. This procedure is recommended by the work of Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Ultimately, no outliers were found.

In order to interpret the output provided by the analysis, the study verified and certified the information concerning the sample (i.e., interpreted if the direction of the relationships depends on the way the variables were scored; determined the strength of the relationships; calculated the coefficient of determination; and assessed the significance level and the shared variance). These steps were recommended by Pallant (2013) for using the SPSS software. After data cleaning, to eliminate inaccuracies, descriptive statistics were evaluated (i.e., data distribution, means, and standard deviations). Investigating these principles are helpful to avoid relevant consequences in the subsequent steps of the analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Primary statistical analysis. The study used five hierarchical linear regression models to examine the possibility of curvilinear relationships between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities in college students. The hierarchical regression demonstrated whether the variables explained a statistically significant amount of variance in the DV after accounting for all other variables. The study predicted U-shaped relationships, which means the effect of x is positive for low values of x , but negative for high values, or vice versa. It was expected that high scores on the tail ends of the political affiliation scale were associated with high scores associated with the subscales such as worrying,

rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, and emotional irresponsibility. Estimating two regression lines, one for low and one for high values of x , would allow testing for a sign change without a functional form assumption.

The study also explored whether the curvilinear relationship was moderated by age. Moderated multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether and to what extent age affected the relationship between political affiliation and its influence on rational judgment (i.e., the five subscales). Specifically, multiple regressions (i.e., main effects and interaction models) for each of the five rational subscales was completed. The main effects regression models determined associations between political affiliation and rational judgment regarding certain subscales and political tendencies. In the interaction models, an interaction term was added to each of the regressions as a moderator to determine whether political affiliation and its impact on rational judgment is influenced by age. Furthermore, the study examined simple slopes following the completion of the analysis for any significant moderations.

Expected Findings

The study tested the hypotheses outlined above for the relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment. Hypothesis 1 predicted a curvilinear relationship between the constructs. Assuming that extremists are similar in their lack of rational judgment, Hypothesis 1 predicted a U-shaped curvilinear relationship with higher political affiliation and lower ability to demonstrate rational judgment toward the extremes. Finally, assuming that deviating from rational judgment requires cognitive resources, Hypothesis 1 predicted a U-shaped curvilinear relationship with higher levels of rational judgment toward the extremes and lower levels toward the center. Hypothesis 2 predicted a moderating effect of age on a curvilinear relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment.

The research examined the curvilinear relationship between two variables: excessive political affiliation (IV) and rational judgment (DV) with respect to personal and social responsibilities based on the prospects of the participants. The primary hypothesis led to the prediction of whether there was a significant curvilinear relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment of undergraduate students and individuals who completed a postsecondary education concerning personal and social factors. The socio-demographic age provided information about the participants to indicate whether there were relationships between this variable and the two primary variables. These factors were linked to the hypothesis associated with the IV and DV.

Reasonable data were justified considering these secondary sources in the research questions. Previous studies have explored the effects of ethnic diversity in terms of making a decision involving social subjects (Charles & Carstensen, 2010; McMullim, 2000). Studies have suggested that aging is associated with changes in decision-making including increased prosocial tendencies (Charles & Carstensen, 2010; Cherkas et al., 2006). Moreover, age relates not only to biological but also sociological factors. It is a social construction that has evident consequences and effects on social matters (Cherkas et al., 2006). Therefore, age is an essential element to consider when exploring the political tendencies of individuals and the role of these factors on the level of personal and social responsibility (Burden & Klofstad, 2005; Jost & Amodio, 2012).

This investigation explored the findings, identification, and comparison of topics in the literature review and placed each content within the context of the theoretical framework supporting the dissertation. Although the study failed to reject the null hypotheses, the interpretation of the data corroborated the research problem in specific aspects and compared the results with the research question underlined in the study. The results disclosed predicted

outcomes or indicated whether the data refute the same. The research highlighted the preeminent findings based on the overall results, suggesting how the significant points filled gaps in comprehending the research problem. When summarizing the disclosures, the study synthesized the answers associated with the research questions, providing a narrative summary of the prevailing findings and described the utility of the research in terms of contribution to educational science. The research offered recommendations to be considered for future research. Furthermore, the suggestions were linked to the limitations of the study or any remaining gaps in the literature not addressed in the dissertation. As cited and justified previously, the study predicted limitations. However, these limitations did not inhibit the effective interpretation of the results as corroborated by pertaining studies that supported the justifications.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting research online might generate challenges in protecting human participants and preserving the quality of the data (American Psychological Association, 2010). The highest ethical principles in rank of importance underlying research involving human beings mentioned in the Belmont Report prepared by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research in 1979 (Vollmer & Howard, 2010) include the following:

- 1) Respect for persons: Individuals should be treated as autonomous respondents who can make informed decisions to agree or refuse to participate in the research. Potential participants who are not capable of self-determination because of diminished capacity (e.g., children or mentally ill individuals) require protection.
- 2) Beneficence: Researchers are obligated to secure the well-being of the human participant, maximizing possible benefits from their participation and minimizing harm.

3) Justice: The responsibilities of being a research participant and the benefits of the study should be equitably distributed (Vollmer & Howard, 2010).

The Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects formalized the aforementioned principles (i.e., Common Rule). The regulation sets standards for assessing the degree of risk to the participants and trade-offs between risk and benefit and for informed consent before individuals participate in research. The standards established the process named Institutional Review Board (IRB) system, which assists those conducting research involving human participants to comply with the spirit and the letter of the regulation (Vollmer & Howard, 2010). The researcher followed the aforementioned ethical principles to protect the respondents considering the online safety and privacy settings available. The confidentiality protection measures mentioned in the previous section, storage and protection of data were also taken into consideration. The present research did not offer risks to individuals who chose to participate as the topics were non-sensitive.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The present research aimed to examine the potential curvilinear relationship between political affiliation and rational judgment on personal and social responsibilities among individuals 18 and older. Previous social and political studies have focused on the effects of rationality on reasoning and the principles that are likely to impede progress toward improving rational and logical thinking (Pham, 2007; Vlaev et al., 2016). This study focused on rationality because it is the predominant model of judgment in political and cognitive science (Simon, 1990; Westen et al., 2006). It indicates that individuals are rational, but there are limits imposed by cognition (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013; Westen et al., 2001). The rationale for the selection was to verify if this outcome might influence responses when it comes to personal and social responsibilities and explore whether there were distinctions based on age. Until today, rational judgment among individuals who embrace political affiliations at a high level is unknown.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1. Is there a significant relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rational judgment of the liberal and conservative college students concerning personal and social responsibilities?

H1_{0a}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying

H1_{1a}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying with higher levels of worrying toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0b}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Rigidity

H1_{1b}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rigidity with higher levels of Rigidity toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0c}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance

H1_{1c}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance with higher levels of rigidity toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0d}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Need for Approval

H1_{1d}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance with higher levels of *Need for Approval* toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

H1_{0e}: There will be no significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Emotional Irresponsibility

H1_{1e}: There will be a significant U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and problem avoidance with higher levels of Emotional Irresponsibility toward the political extremes and lower levels toward the center

RQ2. Does the age of liberal and conservative college students who demonstrate a high level of political affiliation influence the rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities?

H2_{0a}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying

H2_{1a}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Worrying

H2_{0b}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Rigidity

H2_{1b}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Rigidity

H2_{0c}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance

H2_{1c}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Problem Avoidance

H2_{0d}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Need for Approval

H2_{1d}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Need for Approval

H2_{0e}: Age will not significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Emotional Irresponsibility

H2_{1e}: Age will significantly influence the U-shaped curvilinear relationship between a high level of political affiliation and Emotional Irresponsibility

Description of the Sample

Organization of the Data

A power analysis was conducted using G*Power to determine the number of participants required for this study (Faul et al., 2007). A total of 68 participants was necessary to achieve 80.4% power. To account for oversampling, subject dropout, and missing data, it was estimated

that a minimum of 82 participants was necessary to ensure that power was not impacted by potential data loss. One hundred and seventeen respondents participated in the study and 70 individuals were retained for statistical analyses after the cleaning data process.

IRB approval was granted to conduct the study online via social media outlets including Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp. The research utilized two online-based software programs to recruit participants via online solicitations. The first was SurveyMonkey and the second was Psychological Research on the Net (Online Research Alliance). The Psychological Research on the Net is sponsored by the Department of Psychology of Hanover College. Social media provided the link of the SurveyMonkey website for potential participants who were willing to take the survey. Other social media outlets were also utilized to gather potential respondents. These social media were used to introduce the SurveyMonkey link inviting persons to participate in the research.

To control for participants' anonymity and confidentiality, the author activated the available privacy settings in SurveyMonkey. The next step involved the transference of the raw data from SurveyMonkey into an SPSS spreadsheet which was saved on a flash drive. This data will be kept secure for 3 years as per Keiser University policy.

Data Cleaning and Assumptions

The consent approval and age criteria were included on the first page of the survey. Potential respondents who did not agree with the terms of the research and/or were less than 18 years of age were automatically redirected to the last page of the survey which was the Thank You for Visiting page. These participants were not included in the completed dataset. Prior to preliminary data analysis, the raw data were examined to ensure complete responses, correct coding, and labeling the variables for better identification during the analyses and visualization

of the output. Information related to employment and whether the participant was enrolled in a private or public college were properly labeled to avoid undetermined questions (e.g., specify, select). The first survey (ICS) had two phrases to select from in which number 1 represented the first question (i.e., measuring conservative tendency) and number 2 corresponded to the second option (i.e., measuring liberal tendency). The second survey (IBI) offered responses associated with the Likert scale (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree). The elimination of certain respondents was based on the requirements for the study. The coding steps and the rationale for eliminating participants are presented below (See Table 1 below).

The IBI survey used a Likert scale (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree) for answering questions that contained some items which are reverse scored. The numerical scoring scale ran in the opposite direction and had to be recoded. In the measure utilized for this research strongly disagree would attract a score of 5, disagree would be 4, neither agree nor disagree still equals 3, agree becomes 2 and strongly agree would be 1. The reverse-scored questions are 1, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 26, 27, 30, 42, 46, 48, and 49. After the reverse-scored function was performed, total score for each participant was calculated.

Codes were used to specify items associated with sex, location, level of education, political party, race, and ethnicity. Participants were asked to provide their age specifically (i.e., open question). Demographics and measure characteristics of the sample are included below in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics Characteristics

Variable	
Mean Age (SD)	34(15)
Political party (N)	
Liberal	28
Conservative	21
Other	12
I do not know	9
Sex (N)	
Male	18
Female	52
Highest level of education (N)	
Associate	9
Bachelors	40
Masters	10
Doctorate	4
Some college	7
Race (N)	
White	48
African American	5
Hispanic	3
Latino	10
Asian	1
Indian	1
Other	2
Ethnicity (N)	
North American	43
European	6
Central American	2
South American	14
African countries	1
Asian countries	2
Middle East countries	2

The data were examined for data input errors, including missingness and outliers. To screen for missing data, individual scores for each variable were examined. To check for outliers, data were screened to determine participants who had scores above or below 3 *SD* from the group mean. This procedure is recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). The results revealed that the study has no outliers. A total of 37 participant responses were removed from 107 who began the study. Therefore, the final sample size for the analysis was 70. The rationale for participants who were removed from the sample is listed in Table 2 below. The statistical significance for all analyses was determined using an alpha level of .05.

Table 2

Reasons for Participant Data Removal

	N	%
Total of number of responses received	10	9.3 %
Did not report age	2	1.9 %
Did not report ethnicity	2	1.9 %
Did not report race	1	1 %
Does not live in the United States	12	11.2 %
Did not complete ICS survey	8	7.4 %
Did not complete IBI survey	1	1 %
Did not complete any survey	11	10.3 %

Primary Data Analysis

RQ1. Is there a significant relationship between a high level of political affiliation and rational judgment of the liberal and conservative college students concerning personal and social responsibilities?

Five hierarchical linear regression models (i.e., one for each IBI subscale) were used to examine the possibility of curvilinear relationships between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment. Curvilinear relations between IV and DV were examined to identify the predicted U-shaped relationships. The researcher expected tail ends of excessive political affiliation measuring between -10 and +10 associated with high scores related to the subscales worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, and emotional irresponsibility. A curvilinear regression was performed using linear and quadratic functions to identify a potential bend in the regression line. The variables were calculated to determine the presence of a curvilinear relationship, and a quadratic term was computed by squaring the total ICS score (See Table 3).

Table 3

Sample Political Affiliation (ICS) and Rational Judgment (IBI) Scores

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Total ICS Score	-3.057	5.40
IBI Total Score		
Worrying subscale score	37.83	6.93
Rigidity subscale score	41.53	8.47
Problem Avoidance subscale score	24.96	6.31
Need for Approval subscale score	19.23	4.16
Emotional Irresponsibility subscale score	21.46	6.00

A hierarchical multiple regression was performed to determine whether the addition of the squared total ICS score (curvilinear fit) term improved the prediction of the variable worrying and above total ICS score alone (linear fit). Model 1 of the total ICS score significantly predicted worrying (Model 1), $R^2=.096$, $F(1, 68) = 7.26$, $p = .009$; adjusted $R^2=.083$. The addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of worrying (Model 2) led to a statistically significant increase in $R^2 = .125$, $F(2, 67) = 4.80$, $p = .001$, indicating that the curvilinear model was the best fit for the data (See Table 4 below). The results revealed that there is a relationship between political affiliation and worrying. However, Figure 1 reveals an inverse U-shaped curvilinear relationship; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4

Regression table for Political Affiliation (ICS) toward the Rational Judgment Worrying (IBI)

Predictor variable: ICS	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1					
Total ICS score	-.40	.15	-.31	-2.7	.01
Model 2					
Total ICS score	-.56	.18	-.44	-3.07	.003
Squared Total ICS score	-.04	.03	-.21	-1.49	.14

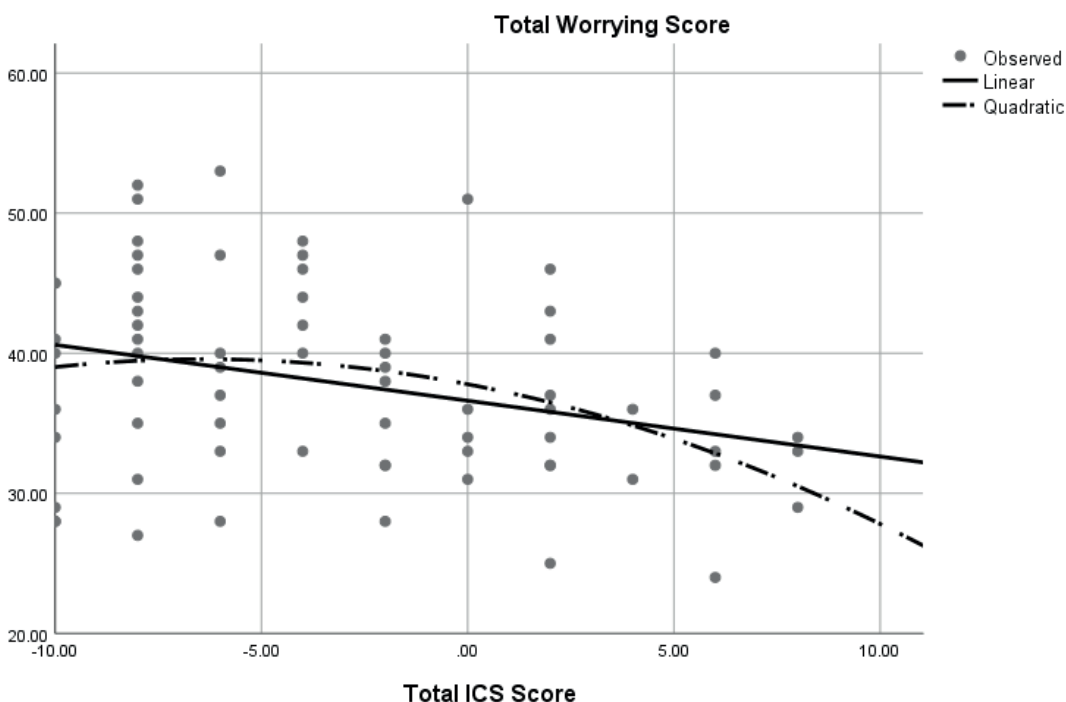


Figure 1. The relationship between the total ICS and worrying

A hierarchical multiple regression was run to determine whether the addition of the squared total ICS score term improved the prediction of the variable rigidity and above total ICS score alone. The model of total ICS score predicted rigidity (Model 1) as statistically significant, $R_2 = .240$, $F(1, 68) = 21.5$, $p < .001$; adjusted $R_2 = .229$. The addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of rigidity (Model 2) was not statistically significant $R_2 = .242$, $F(1, 67) = .168$, $p = .683$ (See Table 5). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected (See Figure 2; Table 5 below). This result illustrated that the linear model was the best fit for the data. There is a positive linear association between the ICS variable score and the subscale rigidity suggesting that higher levels of rigidity are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies.

Table 5

Regression table of Political Affiliation (ICS) toward the Rational Judgment Rigidity (IBI)

Predictor variable: ICS	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1					
Total ICS score	.768	.166	.490	4.637	.000
Model 2					
Total ICS score	.718	.208	.458	3.457	.001
Squared Total ICS score	-.014	.033	-.054	-.410	.683

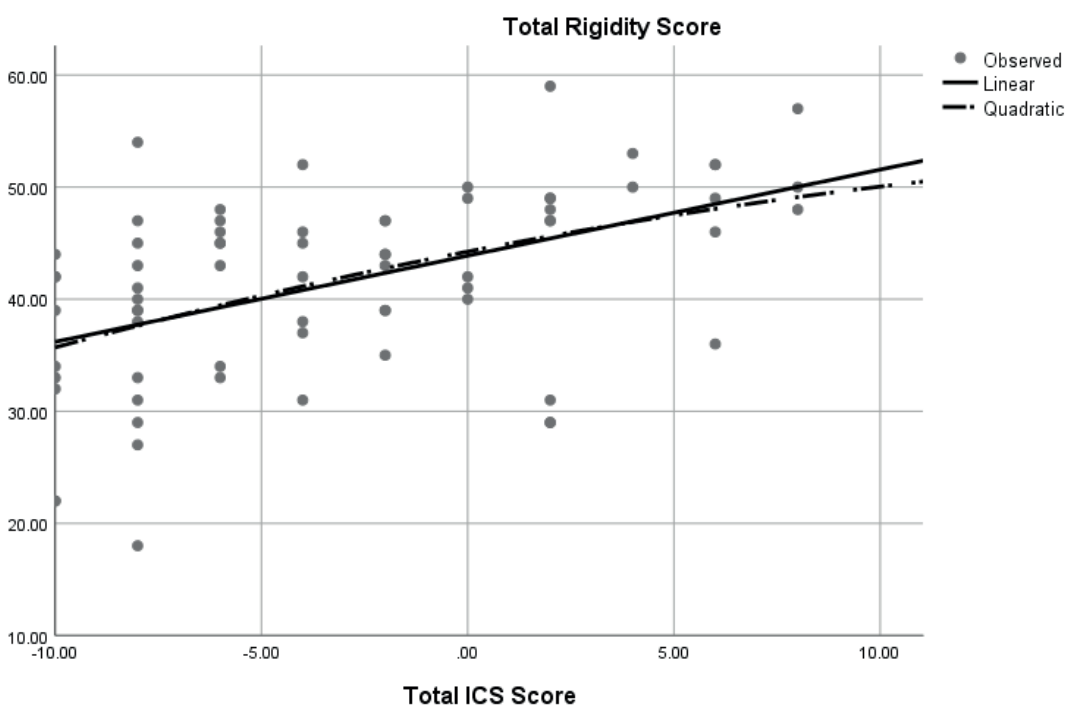


Figure 2. Relationship between the total ICS and rigidity

A hierarchical multiple regression was performed to determine whether the addition of the squared total ICS score term improved the prediction of the variable need for approval and above total ICS score alone. The model of the total ICS score predicted that the need for approval (Model 1) was not statistically significant, $R^2 = .001$, $F(1, 68) = .063$, $p = .803$;

adjusted $R^2 = -.014$. The addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of need for approval (Model 2) was also not statistically significant $R^2 = .015$, $F(1, 67) = .965$, $p = .329$. There is no significant relationship between the two variables; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected (See Figure 3; Table 6 below).

Table 6

Regression table of Political Affiliation (ICS) toward the Rational Judgment Need for Approval (IBI)

Predictor variable: ICS	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1					
Total ICS score	-.023	.093	-.030	-.250	.803
Model 2					
Total ICS score	-.091	.116	-.119	-.786	.434
Squared Total ICS score	-.018	.019	-.148	-.982	.329

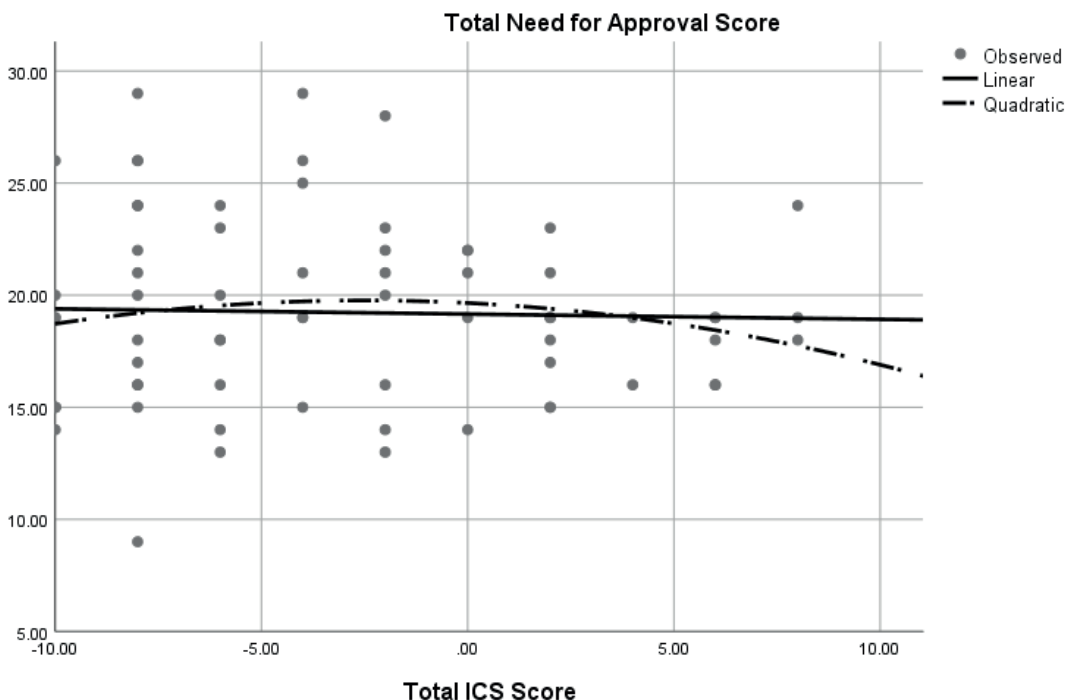


Figure 3. Relationship between the total ICS and need for approval

A hierarchical multiple regression was performed to determine whether the addition of the squared total ICS score term improved the prediction of the variable problem avoidance and above total ICS score alone. The model of total ICS score predicted that problem avoidance (Model 1) was statistically significant, $R^2 = .187$, $F(1, 68) = 15.6$, $p < .001$ adjusted $R^2 = .175$. The addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of problem avoidance (Model 2) led to a non-statistically significant increase in $R^2 = .191$, $F(1, 67) = 362$, $p = .549$. The results illustrated that the linear model was the best fit for the data (See Figure 4; Table 7). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This result illustrated that there is a negative association between ICS variable score and the subscale need for approval, indicating that lower levels of problem avoidance are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies.

Table 7

Regression table of Political Affiliation (ICS) toward the Rational Judgment Problem Avoidance (IBI)

Predictor variable: ICS	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1					
Total ICS score	-.505	.128	-.432	-3.952	.000
Model 2					
Total ICS score	-.448	.160	-.383	-2.801	.007
Squared Total ICS score	.016	.026	.082	.602	.549

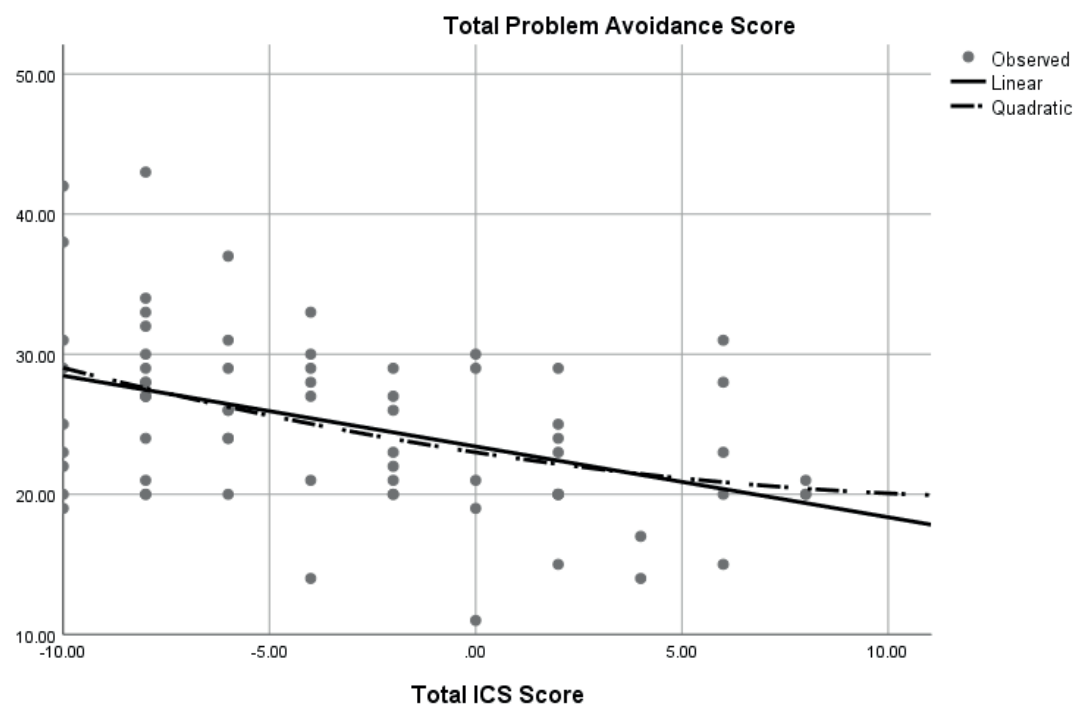


Figure 4. Relationship between the total ICS and problem avoidance

A hierarchical multiple regression was performed to determine whether the addition of the squared total ICS score term improved the prediction of the variable emotional irresponsibility and above total ICS score alone. The model of total ICS score predicted that

emotional irresponsibility (Model 1) was statistically significant, $R^2 = .232$, $F(1, 68) = 20.4$, $p < .001$; adjusted $R^2 = .220$. The addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of emotional irresponsibility (Model 2) led to a non-statistically significant increase in $R^2 = .232$, $F(1, 67) = .070$, $p = .792$. This indicated that the linear model was the best fit for the data (See Figure 5; Table 8). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. There is a negative association between the ICS variable score and the variable emotional irresponsibility, indicating lower levels of emotional irresponsibility are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies.

Table 8

Regression table of Political Affiliation (ICS) toward the Rational Judgment Emotional Irresponsibility (IBI)

Predictor variable: ICS	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1					
Total ICS score	-.534	.118	-.481	-4.527	.000
Model 2					
Total ICS score	-.511	.148	-.460	-3.454	.001
Squared Total ICS score	.006	.024	.035	.264	.792



Figure 5. Relationship between the total ICS and the outcome emotional irresponsibility

RQ2. Does the age of liberal and conservative college students who demonstrate a high level of political affiliation influence the rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities?

Moderated multiple regression was used to determine whether and to what extent age influences the curvilinear relationship between political affiliation and rational judgment (i.e., five subscales). A standard methodology determined whether a moderating effect existed, which entails the addition of an interaction term in a multiple regression model as demonstrated below.

To test the hypothesis that rational judgment (DV) is a function of multiple impact and, more specifically, whether age moderates the relationship between excessive political affiliation (ICS) and rational judgment, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. To avoid

multicollinearity, total ICS score and age were mean centered prior to the analyses (Aiken & West, 1991).

Worrying

Two regressions were estimated: a main effects model and an interaction model. The overall model was significant, $R^2=.20$, $F(3, 66) = 5.51$, $p = .002$. However, the interaction term was not significant ($t = .44$, $p = .66$). This indicates that age does not moderate the relationship between political affiliation and the variable worrying. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Rigidity

Two regressions were estimated: a main effects model and an interaction model. The overall model was significant, $R^2=.25$, $F(3, 66) = 7.50$, $p < .001$. However, the interaction term was not significant ($t = -.03$, $p = .98$). This model indicates that age does not moderate the relationship between political affiliation and the variable rigidity. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Need for Approval

Two regressions were estimated: a main effects model and an interaction model. The overall model was not significant, $R^2=.002$, $F(3, 66) = .044$, $p = .99$. Therefore, the interaction and primary effects were not evaluated. This model indicates that age added does not moderate the relationship between political affiliation and the variable need for approval. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

Problem Avoidance

Two regressions were estimated: a main effects model and an interaction model. The overall model was significant; $R^2=.24$, $F(3, 66) = 7.07$, $p < .001$. However, the interaction term

was not significant ($t = -.39, p = .70$). This model indicates that age does not moderate the relationship between political affiliation and problem avoidance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Emotional Irresponsibility

Two regressions were estimated: a main effects model and an interaction model. The overall model was significant; $R^2 = .24, F(3, 66) = 7.50, p < .001$. However, the interaction term was not significant ($t = 1.42, p = .16$). This model indicates that age does not moderate the relationship between political affiliation and emotional irresponsibility. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Conclusion

This study failed to reject the null hypothesis concluding that there is no curvilinear relationship between the variable excessive political affiliation and rational judgment. Moreover, findings revealed that age does not moderate the variables.

Five hierarchical linear regression models were used to examine the possibility of curvilinear relationships between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment. Curvilinear relations between IV and DV were examined to predict U-shaped relationships. A curvilinear regression was performed using linear and quadratic functions to identify a potential bend in the regression line.

Hierarchical multiple regression was run to determine whether the addition of the squared total ICS score (curvilinear fit) term improved the prediction of the variable worrying and above total ICS score alone (linear fit). Findings indicated that there was a relationship between political affiliation and worrying. However, an inverse U-shaped curvilinear relationship was obtained; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The same regression was run for the

variables: rigidity, need for approval, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility. The results revealed a linear model for each variable. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Moderated multiple regression was used to determine whether and to what extent age influences the curvilinear relationship between political affiliation and rational judgment. When it comes to the variable worrying, results indicated that age does not moderate the relationship between political affiliation and this variable. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. For rigidity, the model indicated that age does not moderate the relationship between political affiliation and this variable either. Therefore, the null hypothesis was also not rejected. Similar indications were found when investigating the variable political affiliation and the variables need for approval, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility. Therefore, the null hypotheses were not rejected for all the subscales. To summarize, this study failed to reject the null hypothesis concluding that there is no curvilinear relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment. The findings also revealed that age does not moderate the respective variables. These results did not indicate extreme levels regarding political views, showing no significant relationship with rational judgment and no significant influence of age between the variables.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study aimed to determine whether the excessive political participation of individuals who self-identified as liberal or conservative as well as the persons who do not have a political party, influenced their rationality concerning personal and social responsibilities. It outlined the misconception that the act of voting is merely a rational act which is supported in previous studies (Brader, 2006; Burden & Klobstad, 2005; Clore, 2011; Koger & Winter, 2010; Kollmuss & Agyman, 2002; Maroney, 2009; Marcus et al., 2000; Opatow & Weiss, 2000; Schmidt et al., 2010). In order to explore this proposition, the study examined the emotional and cognitive appeals that tend to influence voters' decisions and actions when it comes to decision-making. In the following sections, the study results are summarized and discussed, and the implications as well as limitations are provided as suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Results

Sample Characteristics

The research population was American citizens, non-American citizens, voters, and nonvoters over the age of 18 who live in the United States. Voter registration information was not collected. The demographics survey contained boxes in which participants selected their age, race, ethnicity, and sex. The description of each characteristic of the population is elucidated below.

The research sample included men and women, undergraduate students aged 18 or older and individuals who had completed some type of higher education. The demographic questionnaire was included to capture following information: Race e.g., White, African American, Native American, Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic, Latino, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Indo, Other. *Other* represented any other race not significantly distributed in the US;

Ethnicity (e.g., American, Canadian, European, Scandinavian, Central America, South American, African countries, Asian countries, Middle Easterner, India, Other) as well as any other race not significantly distributed in the US.

The research utilized two online-based software programs to recruit participants via online solicitations. The first was SurveyMonkey and the second was Psychological Research on the Net (i.e., Online Research Alliance). Psychological Research on the Net is sponsored by the Department of Psychology of Hanover College. The link for SurveyMonkey was provided for potential participants via social media (e.g., Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp). Other social media sites were used to introduce the research and provide the SurveyMonkey link for potential participants. These included Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp

Scale Characteristics

The ICS contains 10 questions included in the Pew Research Center surveys to appraise the extent to which respondents endorse liberal or conservative perspectives across a range of political values (Pew Research Center, 2014). This scale was selected because it gauges the extent to which individuals offer more liberal or conservative views across a range of political value dimensions. It is a valuable instrument for associating the opinion of respondents regarding diverse issues that range from social safety to sexual preference to military strength. This ideological scale correlates traditional and liberal perspectives surrounding similar political topics (Pew Research Center, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, the original questions of this scale were recoded as follows: -1 for a liberal response, +1 for a conservative response, and 0 for other responses (e.g., don't know, refused, volunteered). Accordingly, scores on the full scale ranged from -10 (i.e., liberal responses to all 10 questions) to +10 (i.e., conservative responses to all 10 questions). The ranges

are as follows: consistently conservative (+7 to +10); mostly conservative (+3 to +6); mixed (-2 to +2); primarily liberal (-6 to -3); and consistently liberal (-10 to -7).

In order to put these responses in perspective, respondents that endorse five liberal and five conservative views or six of one and four of the other are considered as having mixed ideological views. Respondents who endorse seven conservative and three liberal responses, or eight and two are considered mostly conservative. Respondents choosing nine conservative responses and one liberal response, or all ten conservatives are considered consistently conservative. Since some people do not answer every item, other combinations are also possible (Pew Research Center, 2014). American political thinking is multidimensional, and an effort to even out an ideology to a single left or right dimension might lead to omission of important features. However, the purpose of the present scale was to explore the concept of ideological consistency sharing American liberal or conservative views across a range of dimensions of beliefs also named ideological constraint or ideological sorting by political scientists and other researchers (Pew Research Center, 2014).

The IBI is a 50-item self-report measure of irrational beliefs. This scale was developed by Koopmans et al. (1994) in the Netherlands. It measures self-defeating beliefs (Bridges & Sanderman, 2002) and irrational beliefs as conceptualized in the theory postulated by Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Du Plessis, Moller, & Steel, 2004). The scale was developed for the assessment of irrational thinking (Bridges & Sanderman, 2004). The present study utilized the North American population-based validation (see Appendix B). The IBI contains five factors: Worrying, Rigidity, Problem Avoidance, Need for Approval, and Emotional Irresponsibility (Koopmans et al., 1994). Each item is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (i.e., *strongly disagree*) to 5 (i.e., *strongly agree*). A high score was

considered to reflect higher irrationality. The total score was used to assess the level of irrationality, while the five subscales provided information on the type of irrational beliefs that the participants endorsed (Nieuwenhuijsen et al., 2010).

Primary Analysis (RQ 1)

This study utilized regression analyses to examine the statistical relationship between the variables excessive political affiliation (IV) and rational judgment (DV) in undergraduate students and individuals who had completed postsecondary education concerning personal and social factors. Five hierarchical linear regression models (i.e., one for each IBI subscale) were used to examine the possibility of curvilinear relationships between these variables. Curvilinear relations were investigated to identify predicted U-shaped relationships among variables with respect to personal and social responsibilities based on the prospects of the participants. The primary hypothesis examined whether or not there was a significant curvilinear relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment of the participants.

It was expected that there would be tail ends of excessive political affiliation measuring between -10 and +10 associated with high scores related to the subscales worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, and emotional irresponsibility. A curvilinear regression was performed using linear and quadratic functions to identify a potential bend in the regression line. The variables were calculated to determine the presence of a curvilinear relationship; a quadratic term was computed by squaring the total ICS score.

The study tested the hypotheses outlined above associating each variable with hypothesis 1 to predict a curvilinear relationship between the constructs. Assuming that participants with more extreme views are similar in their lack of rational judgment, hypothesis 1 predicted a U-shaped curvilinear relationship with higher political affiliation and lower ability to demonstrate

rational judgment toward the extremes. Finally, assuming that deviating from rational judgment requires cognitive resources, hypothesis 1 predicted a U-shaped curvilinear relationship with higher levels of rational judgment toward the extremes and lower levels toward the center.

Findings revealed that the Model 1 of total ICS score significantly predicted worrying, and that the addition of squared Total ICS score to the prediction of worrying (Model 2) led to a statistically significant increase, indicating that the curvilinear model was the best fit for the data (see Table 4). The results revealed that there is a relationship between political affiliation and worrying. However, Figure 1 reveals an inverse U-shaped curvilinear relationship; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The model of total ICS score predicted rigidity (Model 1) as statistically significant. However, the addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of rigidity (Model 2) was not statistically significant (see Table 5). This result illustrated that the linear model was the best fit for the data. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. There was a positive linear association between the ICS variable score and the subscale rigidity, suggesting that higher levels of rigidity are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies.

The model of total ICS score that predicted need for approval (Model 1) was not statistically significant. The addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of need for approval (Model 2) was also not statistically significant. There is no significant relationship between the two variables; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The model of total ICS score that predicted problem avoidance (Model 1) was statistically significant; however, the addition of squared total ICS score to the prediction of problem avoidance (Model 2) led to a non-statistically significant increase. The results illustrated that the linear model was the best fit for the data (see Figure 4, p. 92; Table 7, p. 91). Therefore,

the null hypothesis was not rejected. This result illustrated that there is a negative association between ICS variable score and the subscale need for approval, indicating that lower levels of problem avoidance are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies.

The model of Total ICS score that predicted emotional irresponsibility (Model 1) was statistically significant; however, the addition of squared Total ICS score to the prediction of emotionally irresponsibility (Model 2) led to a non-statistically significant increase. This indicated that the linear model was the best fit for the data (see Figure 5, p. 93; Table 8, p. 93). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. There is a negative association between the ICS variable score and the variable emotional irresponsibility, indicating lower levels of emotional irresponsibility are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies.

Research Question 2

The socio-demographic age was utilized to determine whether and to what extent it influences the curvilinear relationship between political affiliation (IV) and rational judgment (DV) considering the five subscales of the IBI which measure rational beliefs. Thus, this factor was linked to hypothesis 1 associated with the IV and DV. A moderated multiple regression was performed to determine if the addition of the squared total ICS score (curvilinear fit) term improved the prediction of the variables (i.e., subscales worrying, rigidity, need for approval, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility) and above total ICS score alone (linear fit).

A standard methodology determined whether the moderating effect existed which entails the addition of an interaction term in a multiple regression model. To test the hypothesis that rational judgment (DV) is a function of multiple impacts, and more specifically whether age moderates the relationship between excessive political affiliation (ICS) and rational judgment, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results indicated that the overall

effect models on the variables worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility were significant but not when it came to need for approval. Furthermore, the interaction terms were not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Discussion of the Results

Results

The present study explored the level of political affiliation and rational judgment of the participants based on their opinion concerning the government interferences such as benefits for the poor, military actions, environmental laws, and corporation profits as well as social matters involving discrimination against African Americans, immigrants, and homosexual subjects. It also explored whether extreme levels of political ideology were associated with irrationality.

Based on the graphs and findings of both analyses, the curvilinear moderator analysis and the moderate multiple regression, when it comes to the primary hypothesis, Model 1 (i.e., linear) is a better fit for the data associated with the variables rigidity, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility. Conversely, the nonlinear model is a better fit for data related to the variable worrying; however, it is not in the expected direction. Therefore, the findings indicate that there was no significant relationship between the variable need for approval and political affiliation.

The results demonstrated that the overall models on the variables worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, and emotional irresponsibility (i.e., IBI subscales) were significant in terms of political affiliation (i.e., ICS scale) but not significant in terms of need for approval (i.e., IBI subscale). More broadly, the findings indicate whether the two predominant parties had a more positive association between ICS score and respective variables. For instance, the interpretation of the results indicated that a higher level of the variable rigidity is associated with a higher level

of liberal tendencies. Lower levels of the variable problem avoidance are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies. Lower levels of need for approval are associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies. Regarding Research Question 2, the interaction terms were not significant, and they pointed out that age did not moderate the relationships between political affiliation (IV) and any of the variables (that is worrying, rigidity, problem avoidance, need for approval, emotional irresponsibility). Therefore, the null hypotheses were not rejected.

Discussion of findings

The present research examined the curvilinear relationship between high level of political affiliation toward rational judgment concerning personal and social responsibilities among college students and individuals who have completed at least some type of higher education. For decades, social and political scientists have been studying the effects of rationality on reasoning and the principles that are likely to impede progress toward improving rational and logical thinking (Pham, 2007; Vlaev et al., 2016). However, rational judgment among individuals who embrace political affiliations at a high level is unknown.

The aim of this study was to calculate the levels of irrationality, measured by the subscales of the IBI, as an effect of the ideological response options available on the ICS. Rationality is the predominant model of judgment in political and cognitive science (Simon, 1990; Westen et al., 2006). The rationality model indicates that individuals are rational, but there are limits imposed by cognition (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013; Westen et al., 2001). Researchers have used methods from cognitive neuroscience to determine the mechanisms involved in behavior and political cognition (Cacioppo & Visser, 2003; Lieberman et al., 2003; Lovett, 2006; Pham, 2007; Theodoridis & Jost, 2011; Vlaev et al., 2016). There are mechanisms that motivate voters or people to sympathize with a certain political party (Aron, 2004; Harmon-Jones, 2003).

In the last decade, advances in the science of emotions have led to a paradigm shift in terms of decision theories (Phelps et al., 2010).

The present study examined whether the absence of rationality due to the demonstration of a high level of political conviction might impede impartial judgments regarding personal and social responsibilities. When it comes to consistent results with previous research, a study developed by Holkstra (2003) and Klitgaard (2007) described evidence that was later classified as typologies connecting the liberal characteristics and choices and their worries about subjects related to welfare and public system. More recently, Pennycook, Cheyne, Koehler, and Fugelsang (2019) reported significant relations among individuals who embrace liberalist ideas, such as worry about global warming and rejection of moral values. According to the authors, beliefs change based on political beliefs (Pennycook et al., 2019). The present study showed converging findings, indicating that ideological scores significantly predicted the variable worrying and that adding a squared total led to a statistically significant increase indicating a curvilinear model. Although this relationship was illustrated in an inverse U-shaped curvilinear relationship which goes against the Research Question 1 prediction, previous research has revealed that relationships between political views and motivation often reveal inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationships (Ma, Pei, & Meng, 2017). Studies have suggested that individuals with more liberal views worry about certain environmental laws (Pennycook et al., 2019), but at the same time, they do not seem to worry about conflict prevention (Jacobsen & Engell, 2018). This result is coherent with the low level of problem avoidance of individuals with more liberal tendencies, which was revealed in the present research.

As an unexpected outcome, this study demonstrated a higher level of the variable rigidity associated with higher levels of liberal tendencies. Rigidity refers to the inability to appreciate

another persons' perspective (Morris & Mansell, 2018). It appears that evidence has shifted over the years. Recent research has suggested that the conservatives might not be as rigid as described. It has been reported that there are misconceptions in this regard (Newman, Schwarz, Graham, & Stone, 2018; Singal, 2018). Furthermore, this study indicated that liberals tend to have a lower capability to avoid conflicts. According to Newman et al. (2018), conservatives find a greater purpose in life (i.e., reflecting on their lives). An intriguing result is associated with the personal beliefs of the liberal democrats and opinion evidence. The AOT-E scale strongly predicted that liberal participants' beliefs changed based on their political ideologies (Pennycook et al., 2019). The interference of cognitive dissonance might impact the ability of some individuals in terms of ideas and opinions (Dusso, 2017).

As noted previously, this study showed that a lower level of the variable problem avoidance was associated with a higher level of liberal tendency. Researchers have stated that once emotional ties are well-established in the mind of a voter and are difficult to modify (Brader, 2006; Valentino et al., 2011). Politicians are aware of these principles that affect the emotions of voters (Sengupta, 2007). They might frame their ideologies to intensify the emotions motivating voters to vote in a desired way. The intensity of the emotion depends on the value given to the sociopolitical topic, turning the topic itself into something more powerful (Wilson & Gilbert, 2008). People ignore rationality and reasoning, which leads passion to take over, causing arguments (Brader & Corrigan, 2006; Brader & Marcus, 2013; Buck, 2014; Landsbaum, 2015; Marcus, 2010; Redlawsk et al., 2007). A study indicated that the more emotional individuals get when political topics are brought up, the less likely they are to logically justify their behaviors, attitudes, and the contents they are embracing (Cho, 2013; Landsbaum, 2015; Lau & Redlawsk, 2006; Marcus, 2010). To summarize, the relationships found in the present study converge with

cognitive dissonance theory according to which some individuals might defend their political beliefs to avoid having inconsistent thoughts (Dusso, 2017). This translates to consistent preferences even when not logical.

Research Question 2 showed that age did not moderate the relationships. This result is in keeping with that of a previous study that reported that the perceptions of older adults were increasingly younger than their current age; older adults might be more flexible in terms of perception now than in the past (Chopik et al., 2018). It is important to consider that the number of participants in the aforementioned research surpassed expectations. Having a large number of participants reduces the risk of accidental extreme results or bias (Bordens & Abbott, 2013). Moral reasoning is based on emotional reactions. This happens because the chances of becoming emotional increase during the decision-making process (Clore, 2011). Decision-making solutions should work on guiding the individual to balance the cost against benefits to maximize their happiness (Blais & Rubenson, 2012). However, environmental factors might lead to information overload, further leading to incoherent decision-making (Cabanac et al., 2002) or experiences associated with cognitive fluency (Oppenheimer, 2008). The topic of social cognition is not influenced by emotions only. Jost and Amadio (2012) studied the influential aspects related to the ideology that serves as a potential motivational force and aspects related to the ideology that serves as a potential motivational force.

Discussion of the Conclusions

This dissertation emphasized that multiple theoretical bases might justify the level (i.e., excessive political affiliation), the choices involved in political tendency (e.g., liberal, conservative), and the personal judgments (e.g., rational, irrational). The results rejected the null hypotheses; however, it is reasonable to consider the significances revealed in Research Question

1. The results provided evidence of the influence of factors associated with emotional process, social cognition, decision-making, behavior, and ideology concepts. In addition, information from theories associated with personality traits demonstrated that rigidity, indecisiveness, vulnerability, self-reliance, and dominance might define which party a person belongs to (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Carney et al., 2008; Gerber & Huber, 2009; Mondak, 2010).

Although the findings do not support the hypotheses, this study presents multiple crucial implications for research concerning the effect of the level of ideological perspectives on rationality in terms of decision-making. Research has revealed that ideologies are shaping policy decisions (Prinja, 2010), and they also influence governance and regulations (Weinshall, Sommer, & Ritov, 2017). Ideology reaches even the scientific field. For instance, a study suggested that there are significant distinctions between conservatives and liberals regarding their orientation toward science, demonstrating the contrary views (Steel, Lach, & Satyal, 2015). Consideration of this knowledge is linked to the need to make more effort to discuss the importance of the use of rationality when it comes to personal and social decisions.

There are limited investigations studying the relationships between these variables due to a major interest in descriptions of the voter's characteristics (Holkstra, 2003; Klitgaard, 2007; Salvi et al., 2016; Graaf, Van Berkel, & Sirovatka 2011) instead of the focus on the ability of individuals to make social decisions, which might be impacted by emotion (Burden & Kloffstad, 2005; Jamtoy, 2012; Jost & Amodio, 2012). In times when voting requirements are questioned, it would be fundamental to develop studies redirecting the practical importance of the research aim.

Limitations

The researcher has been diligent to ensure that the present research study avoided impacts or influences on the interpretation of the findings. However, there were limitations that are inherent to this type of research. For instance, the survey took place online. Although the use of online surveys is increasing, there are still a few concerns (Anabo, Elexpuru-Albizuri, & Villardon-Gallego, 2018). The highest risk associated with online research refers to the confidentiality that is if the research discloses private and identifiable information outside of the research context (Anabo et al., 2018). In order to minimize related interferences, the study used the appropriated technology and the norms surrounding the process (i.e., assessing anonymity, keeping privacy, and minimizing the risks).

Another potential limitation is the self-report survey methodology used in the present study. Self-report surveys might suffer from disadvantages associated with the behaviors of the respondents. For instance, they might contain exaggerated answers and social desirability bias (Heppner et al., 2016). The questions of the survey used in the present study were short and clear to minimize desirability bias. Moreover, it was expected that respondents would show their pride for their political party in their survey responses. That is, individuals would respond based on how they feel (i.e., experience) about each topic. In fact, Table 2 confirmed a lower number of participants (N = 1) who skipped the second part of the survey (IBI) that had questions related to their fears and anxieties. On the contrary, the number of participants who did not take the first part of the survey was higher (N = 8). The initial questionnaire was linked to the ICS, which is the scale that measures political ideology. This result might corroborate a possible lack of political motivation by the general population. It is important to mention that anyone could take the survey irrespective of whether they have postsecondary education or whether they are living

in the USA. In fact, Table 1 also shows the high number of foreigners ($N = 12$) who took the survey.

The present study utilized a random sample of college students or individuals who had completed at least some type of higher education. The use of respondents who are currently college students or who were previously enrolled in higher education tends to limit generalizability of the research results (Seddon & Scheepers, 2012). However, this study purposefully used this sample because it aimed to examine the ability of college students (or individuals who had completed some college) to make decisions based on rational judgment. It is intriguing that students even present an increased interest for political affairs (Simmons & Lilly, 2010; Persson, 2013). When it comes to the effective participation of individuals responding to a political survey, the number of participants was lower than expected. Moreover, in the United States, there are very few recent studies concerning this regard.

This limitation was also extended to the exploratory variable age. A larger number of participants could probably help identify potential curvilinear relationships among the outcomes. Despite these limitations, the present study presents an opening for further investigations on the impact of political affiliation on rationality.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to examine a curvilinear relationship between excessive political affiliation and rational judgment with respect to personal and social responsibilities among individuals aged 18 and older who are enrolled or have completed at least some type of college. It is critically important to consider the ability of this population to make rational decisions not only during the elections but also throughout the year as decisions are made daily concerning government actions and interferences (i.e., welfare, military interventions, and

environmental laws). An effective and productive participation in decisions is essential, and it might impact personal and social responsibilities. The following recommendations summarize the points related to the most significant outcomes of this study.

Based on the results, it is possible to make a strong case to justify the continuation of studies in this nature, aiming to obtain a deeper understanding of age representativeness in political matters. Although the study did not show a moderation relationship between the age of the participants and rational judgment, there are significant findings related to these variables. The lack of rejection of the null hypotheses regarding age as a moderator might explain particular aspects when it comes to potential dynamics that involve different ages in the present moment. For instance, the non-significant difference in opinion between youth and older individuals is corroborated by recent research that revealed more flexibility in adults (Chopik et al., 2018). It is noteworthy that these two groups have one characteristic in common, which is that the members are or have been college students.

The results from this study reported a higher number of female respondents compared to males. This does not match previous studies. For instance, Campbell and Winters (2008) correlated females with a lower level of political participation. In 2010, Coffee and Bolzendahe revealed more female engagement in politics (i.e., running for office, elected), but still at a lower level. The previous study revealed that researchers studying gender differences rarely investigate the political knowledge of the participants (Fraile, 2014). The present dissertation recommends the examination of this progress when it comes to female interest in political matters, participation, and rationality.

An inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationship emerged associated with variable worrying. This type of graphic often indicates a connection with the factor motivation (Ma et al.,

2017). As this dissertation suggested, motivation is a cognitive appeal that influences voters in their actions and decisions. Certain mechanisms motivate voters to sympathize with a specific political party (Aron, 2004; Harmon-Jones, 2003). The rationality model implies that individuals are rational, but there are limits imposed by cognition (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013; Westen et al., 2001; Schurz, 2019). Further research should investigate more profoundly the link between the emotion of individuals who embrace their political affiliation at a high level and such decision theories. Therefore, cognition is an essential element to be considered as it plays an important role in forming an opinion. This statement was also corroborated by the present study.

Finally, investigators should focus on seeking various novel methods of recruitment, including the distribution of flyers face-to-face, which might allow gathering a larger number of respondents. More participants might help when it comes to exploring aspects such as the influence of the motivation of those who embrace political ideologies at a higher level and their coherence in terms of rational judgment and effective participation. Extending the time for collection might offer the opportunity to use complex analyses to investigate details associated with other potential variables. These suggestions are linked to the limitations of the study or any remaining gaps in the literature not addressed in the dissertation.

Conclusion

There are a significant number of studies that have investigated how individuals act if they are engaged or not with their political party (Brader, 2006; Cho, 2013; Parker & Isbell, 2010), the presence of emotions or internal regulations (Small & Lerner, 2008; Tooby & Cosmides, 2008), and whether emotional appeals interfere in voters' interactions when they talk about their political ideologies or vote for their political party (Brader, 2006; Ridout & Searles,

2011; Schoellhammer, 2015; Small & Lerner, 2008). However, the rational judgment of individuals who embrace excessive political affiliations is currently unknown.

This study considered the rationality model as a crucial indicator that individuals are rational but that there are limits imposed by cognition (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013; Westen et al., 2001) and that the interference might influence decisions associated with politics (cite source). The present study outlined the political participation of the individuals from different political parties and also persons who did not self-identify with any party, pointing out the misconception concerning the act of voting as a merely rational act (Brader, 2006; Burden & Klobstad, 2005; Clore, 2011; Koger & Winter, 2010; Kollmuss & Agyman, 2002; Maroney, 2009; Marcus et al., 2000; Opatow & Weiss, 2000; Schmidt et al., 2010). In order to support the propositions included in this research, the study examined the emotional and cognitive appeals that tend to influence voters' decisions and actions when it comes to decision-making suggesting that excessive levels of affiliation and the effect of the moderating variable age would reveal significant outcomes represented by curvilinear relationships between variables; however, this did not occur.

Although the present study failed to reject the null hypotheses, which reported a potential excessive magnitude of the effect of excessive political affiliation toward rational judgment, the overarching goal of the research was to determine whether certain emotional states impact the behaviors and attitudes of the individuals adopting irrational approaches in terms of choices. Furthermore, classifying the individuals by party indicated whether the two predominant parties had more ascendancy over their supporters when it comes to ideological influences. These were confirmed by the summary of the findings that indicated associations between certain emotional characteristics and respective political tendencies, which were reported by the ICS and IBI

scales, and the interpretation of the results regarding Research Question 1 reported high and low levels of responses connected to cognitive structures.

In political science, it is essential to “not to confuse statistical significance with theoretical or substantive importance.” That is, the p value cannot inform the magnitude of the effect of X on Y . Moreover, the p value itself cannot answer questions that scholars are interested in learning about (Figueiredo et al., 2013, p. 47). There are fundamental questions that can only be answered by analyzing the interaction between the neurobiology of emotion-cognition (Okon-Singer et al., 2015). Developing a profound comprehension of the emotional-cognitive brain is crucial not only to elucidate the processes of the mind but also understand the roots of the situational causes associated with each emotion and respective cognition. Additionally, future researchers should consider a larger number of participants to verify specific outcomes for studies.

Ideological Consistency Scale by Pew Research (2014)

Items in the Ideological Consistency Scale

Question #	Conservative Position	[OR]	Liberal Position
Q25a	Government is almost always wasteful and inefficient		Government often does a better job than people give it credit for
Q25b	Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good		Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest
Q25c	Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return		Poor people have hard lives because government benefits don't go far enough to help them live decently
Q25d	The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy		The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt
Q25f	Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition		Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days
Q25g	Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care		Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents
Q25i	The best way to ensure peace is through military strength		Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace
Q25n	Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit		Business corporations make too much profit
Q50r	Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy		Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost
Q50u	Homosexuality should be discouraged by society		Homosexuality should be accepted by society

Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public.

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Figure 6. Ideological Consistency Scale (ICS)

The Irrational Beliefs Inventory - US Version Arranged by Subscales

Answering options - Five-point Likert scale

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Worrying

1. If I can't keep something from happening, I don't worry about it.
2. I worry a lot about certain things in the future.
6. I often can't get my mind off some concern.
7. I tend to become terribly upset when things are not the way I would like them to be.
8. I am fairly easygoing about life.
10. I hardly ever think of such things as death or atomic war.
16. I tend to worry about possible accidents and disasters.
19. I often get excited or upset when things go wrong.
22. Sometimes I can't get a fear off my mind.
26. I feel little anxiety over unexpected danger or future events.
28. Frustrations upset me.
32. I get terribly upset and miserable when things are not the way I like them to be.

Rigidity

3. Certain people are bad or wicked and should be severely punished for their sins.
4. People should observe moral laws more strictly than they do.
9. Punishing oneself for all errors will prevent future mistakes.
14. Those who do wrong deserve to be blamed.
18. A large number of people are guilty of bad sexual conduct.
20. It is sinful to doubt the Bible.
24. The fear of punishment helps people to be good.
29. One should blame oneself severely for all mistakes and wrongdoings.
33. More people should face up to the unpleasantness of life.
34. Helping others is the very basis of life.
35. There is a right way to do everything.
38. Too many evil persons escape the punishment they deserve.
39. It is realistic to expect that there should be no incompatibility in marriage.
41. Immorality should be strongly punished.

Problem Avoidance

11. I avoid facing my problems.
13. I usually try to avoid chores which I dislike doing.
25. I shrink from facing a crisis or difficulty.
27. If something is necessary, I do it even if it is unpleasant.
31. I usually put off important decisions.
36. It is difficult for me to do unpleasant chores.

40. I often spend more time trying to think of ways of getting out of things than it would take me to do them.

44. One should rebel against doing unpleasant things, however necessary, if doing them is unpleasant.

45. I can't stand to take chances.

47. I dislike responsibility.

Need for Approval

5. I want everyone to like me.

21. I often worry about how people approve of and accept me.

23. I hate to fail at anything.

37. It is important to me that others approve of me.

43. What others think of you is most important.

48. Although I like approval, it's not a real need for me.

50. I have considerable concern with what people are feeling about me.

Emotional Irresponsibility

12. A person won't stay angry or blue long, unless he keeps himself that way. 15. If a person wants to, he can be happy under almost any circumstances. 17. Nothing is upsetting in itself - only in the way you interpret it.

30. People are disturbed not by situations but by the view they take of them. 42. There is never any reason to remain sorrowful for very long. 46. Man makes his own hell within himself.

49. People who are miserable have usually made themselves that way.

Summary of Scales

Worrying: 1,2,6,7,8,10,16,19,22,26,28,32

Rigidity: 3,4,9,14,18,20,24,29,33,34,35,38,39,41 Problem avoidance:

11,13,25,27,31,36,40,44,45,47 Demand for approval: 5,21,23,37,43,48,50

Emotional irresponsibility: 12,15,17,30,42,46,49

Scoring Rules

The following items are phrased in a rational direction and should be transformed in the opposite direction, by recoding (1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1):

1, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 26, 27, 30, 42, 46, 48, 49

Figure 7. Irrational Beliefs Inventory (IBI)

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