Spring 2014

The impact of political cues on information seeking and the need for cognitive closure

Aaron Scherer
University of Iowa

THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL CUES ON INFORMATION SEEKING AND THE NEED FOR COGNITIVE CLOSURE

by

Aaron Scherer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Psychology
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2014

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Paul D. Windschitl

Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

_____

PH.D. THESIS

_____

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Aaron Scherer

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Psychology at the May 2014 graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____
Paul D. Windschitl, Thesis Supervisor

_____
Andrew Todd

_____
Jason K. Clark

_____
C. Daryl Cameron

_____
Steven Hitlin

To Mandy

The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion (either as being the received opinion or as being agreeable to itself) draws all things else to support and agree with it.

Francis Bacon
The New Organon

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank all of the people who contributed to me getting to this point. I want to thank my parents, Jeff and Marie, for providing a nurturing environment and always encouraging me to read and learn. I want to thank my advisor, Paul Windschitl, for choosing to take a chance on a student who didn't even know how to apply to grad school correctly and for teaching me the value of being deliberate. Finally, I want to thank my amazing wife Mandy. She has supported me in every way possible: financially, intellectually, and emotionally. Thank you for allowing me to always take a chance in the pursuit of my dreams. I love you and owe you everything.

ABSTRACT

Previous research has demonstrated that the political ideology one adopts is strongly influenced by three social-cognitive motives: motives to reduce uncertainty, manage threats, and experience solidarity. The goal of the current studies was to examine the possibility that this relationship might also work in reverse, with political ideology influencing social-cognitive motives. To this end, four studies examined the impact of conservative cues on need for cognitive closure (NFCC), a measure of motivation to reduce uncertainty, and tested between three accounts of the impact of conservative cues on selective exposure (SE) to confirming information, the primary measure of NFCC in the current studies. Studies 1-3 examined how exposure to the American flag, a conservative cue, impacted SE (Studies 1 and 3) and the accessibility of NFCC (Study 2). Study 4 examined how exposure to partisan news sources impacted SE. Exposure to conservative cues may increase SE by making political group membership salient, resulting in the defensive engagement in SE to maintain a positive view of one's political in-group (social identity account), or by priming the political stereotype that conservatives are high in NFCC, which individuals (stereotype priming account) or only conservatives (active self-concept account) assimilate towards. The four studies produced mixed results, but overall, were most supportive of the stereotype priming account. Specifically, there was evidence that exposure to conservative cues increased SE (Studies 1 and 3) and made NFCC more accessible (Study 2). Additionally, these results were not moderated by political ideology, as predicted by the active self-concept account, and there was no evidence of increased affiliation with one's political in-group, as predicted by the social identity account. In Study 4, exposure to the conservative news source *reduced* SE compared to exposure to the moderate and liberal news sources, results inconsistent with all three accounts. Theoretical and practical implications, as well the complexities of the current studies' results, are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES IX

LIST OF FIGURES X

INTRODUCTION 1

Political Ideology as Motivated Social Cognition 2
Political and Psychological Conservatism 4
Ideology Shifts 6
Directionality: The Chicken or the Egg? 7
Political Stereotypes 8
Priming Politics 9
Need for Cognitive Closure and Selective Exposure 11
Hypotheses 12
Social Identity 14
Stereotype Priming 15
Active Self-Concept 15
Accounts Summary 16
Overview of the Current Studies 17

CHAPTER 1 EFFECT OF FLAG EXPOSURE ON INFORMATION SEEKING 19

Method 19
Participants and Design 19
Procedures 20
Measures 21
Information Selections and Calculation of Selective Exposure 21
Political Attitudes 22
Political Ideology 23
Extremity 23
Political Job Approval and Voting Intentions 23
Subjective Political Knowledge 23
Close-Mindedness 24
System Justification 25
Flag Association 25
Awareness Checks 25
Results 25
Awareness Check 25
Flag Association 26
Selective Exposure 26
Political Attitudes and Extremity 27
Approval Ratings and Voting Intentions 27
Individual Differences and Political Knowledge 28
Exploratory Analyses 29
Effects of Awareness and Flag Affiliation 29
Close-mindedness, Selective Exposure, and Flag Condition 29
Discussion 30

CHAPTER 2 IMPACT OF FLAG EXPOSURE ON NATIONALISM AND NFCC 33

Method 34
Participants and Design 34
Materials and Procedures 34
Measures 35
Need for Cognitive Closure 35
Nationalism-Patriotism 35
Self-Concept Clarity Scale 36
Reaction Times 36
Extremity 36
Results 37
Awareness Check 37
Scores and Accessibility 37
Extremity 38
Effects of Awareness 38
Discussion 38

CHAPTER 3 DOES THE EFFECT OF FLAG EXPOSURE ON SELECTIVE EXPOSURE GENERALIZE? 41

Method 41
Participants and Design 41
Materials and Procedures 42
Measures 43
Selective Exposure 43
Political Knowledge 43
Results 44
Awareness Check 44
Flag Association 44
Selective Exposure 44
Political Attitudes and Extremity 46
Political Knowledge 47
Effects of Awareness and Flag Affiliation 47
Discussion 48

CHAPTER 4 IS IT SIMPLY POLITICS? 49

Method 50
Participants and Design 50
Materials and Procedures 50
Measures 51
Perceptions of News Sources 51
Political Extremity 52
Results 53
Awareness Check 53
Perceptions of News Sources 53
Selective Exposure 54
Political Attitudes and Extremity 55
Effects of Awareness 55
Close-mindedness, Selective Exposure, and Flag Condition 56
Discussion 56

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS 59

Political Cues and Information Seeking 61
Social Identity, Stereotype Priming, or Active Self-Concepts? 64
The Capriciousness of Political Primes 67
Theoretical Implications 70
Practical Implications 72
Conclusions.....74

APPENDIX A: POLITICAL ATTITUDE ITEMS 75

APPENDIX B. EXAMPLE INFORMATION BUFFET TITLES 76

APPENDIX C. OBJECTIVE POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE MEASURE 77

APPENDIX D. TABLES.....78

APPENDIX E. FIGURES.....90

REFERENCES 94

LIST OF TABLES

Table

D1 Selective exposure (SE), political attitudes, and political extremity as a function of flags condition for Study 1 78

D2 Political evaluations, voting intentions, and individual differences as a function of flags condition for Study 1 79

D3. Selective exposure, political attitudes, and political extremity as a function of flags condition and awareness for Study 1 80

D4. Selective exposure, political attitudes, and political extremity as a function of flag affiliation for Study 1 81

D5. Scores, reaction times, and extremity as a function of flags condition for Study 2 82

D6. Scores, reaction times, and extremity as a function of flags condition and awareness for Study 2 83

D7. Selective exposure, political attitudes, extremity, and knowledge by flags condition and information type for Study 3 84

D8. Selective exposure based on continuous measures as a function of flags condition for Study 3 85

D9. Perceptions of News Sources for Study 4 86

D10. Selective Exposure, political attitudes, extremity, and familiarity with news sources as a function of news source condition for Study 4 87

D11. Selective exposure as a function of political issue and when political issue was presented for Study 4 88

D12.Selective exposure based on political issue presentation order as a function of news source condition for Study 4 89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

E1. Motivated-social-cognition model of political conservatism. The red arrow represents the key hypothesis being addressed in this project.....90

E2. Social identity, stereotype priming, and active self-concept accounts.....91

E3. Partial screenshot that includes the header that appeared on the top of the page for the flags condition in Study 1.....92

E4. Partial screenshot that includes the news article with the CNN header that appeared at the beginning of Study 4.....93

INTRODUCTION

The outcome of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election came as a shock to many Americans, but was especially shocking to American conservatives. In the lead-up to the election, most of the media was reporting on poll results suggesting a statistical tie between Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, and Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee. Citing the improvement in Mr. Romney's poll numbers following the first presidential debate, speculations about an under-sampling of Republicans in national polls, and Mr. Romney's attempt to "expand the map" in the week prior to the election, many conservative commentators and pundits predicted a Romney win, if not a Romney landslide. Mr. Obama ended up winning the presidency with 332 electoral votes and 51% of the popular vote to Mr. Romney's 206 electoral votes and 47% of the popular vote. While there was the expected fair share of scapegoating by the GOP, some conservative-leaning commentators, such as *the Atlantic*'s Conor Friedersdorf, noted that conservatives were blindsided by the outcome of the election because they existed in a "conservative echo chamber," which put them at a "self-imposed informational disadvantage" (Friedersdorf, 2012).

As the above example demonstrates, seeking out information that is consistent with our existing worldview can help reduce feelings of uncertainty, but can be highly maladaptive when it comes in direct conflict with reality. One might assume that the need to reduce uncertainty might be equally distributed across the political spectrum, yet the extent to which an individual experiences the need to reduce uncertainty, along with the needs to manage threats and experience solidarity, influences the degree to which an individual endorses conservative or liberal political ideology (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003a; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Put differently, rather than primarily being the result of a rational consideration of the issues, political ideology is strongly influenced by these social-cognitive motives of reducing uncertainty,

managing threats, and experiencing solidarity. Research examining this impact of social-cognitive motives on political ideology has been burgeoning over the last decade (see Jost & Amodio, 2012; Jost et al., 2009 for recent reviews). While previous research has demonstrated the impact of changes in social-cognitive motives on political ideology, a previously unexplored possibility is whether the relationship can also work in the reverse direction, with political ideology influencing social-cognitive motives. The purpose of this paper is to explore this possibility. Specifically, the current studies test whether exposure to conservative cues increases need for cognitive closure, an epistemic motive associated with a need to reduce uncertainty. The assertion that political cues can influence epistemic motives to reduce uncertainty might seem fantastical at first glance, but this hypothesis is based on current theorizing and empirical findings in political psychology. To provide a context for my theorizing, I'll provide brief overviews of political ideology as motivated social cognition, the relationship between political conservatism and psychological conservatism (re: cognitive rigidity), and research on ideological shifts.

Political Ideology as Motivated Social Cognition

The assertion that political cues might impact motives to reduce uncertainty is rooted in the theoretical view of political ideology as a form of motivated social cognition. Before continuing, it might be instructive to first define what is meant by the phrase "political ideology". Defining ideology is a notoriously slippery task, but most definitions of political ideology are characterized as a shared system of beliefs and values regarding the descriptive and normative state of society (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008; Jost et al., 2009). Put differently, political ideology is the interpretive filter in which we interpret the state of society and how to best address societal problems. Working from the perspective that ideology should be a logically coherent and consistently applied set of beliefs, researchers often failed to find evidence for the existence of ideology in the

average person, causing many to claim the "end of ideology" (e.g., Converse, 1964, 2000; Feldman 1988; Kinder, 1998). Noting the fact that ideological self-placement has been the strongest predictor of voting behavior from 1972-2004 and other modest evidence of the impact of ideology on political attitudes (e.g., Erikson & Tedin, 2003; Feldman, 2003; Jacoby, 1991; Knutsen, 1995; Layman & Carsey, 2002), John Jost and his colleagues have argued that ideology is indeed important, and a useful construct for predicting political behavior (Jost et al., 2003a; Jost et al., 2008; Jost et al., 2009; Jost & Amodio, 2012). However, rather than being a coherent set of beliefs manifest in logically consistent policy preferences, Jost and his colleagues argue that political ideology is organized around two key components which are psychologically coherent: resistance to change and acceptance of inequality. Political conservatives tend to be more resistant to change and relatively more accepting of the existence of inequality within society, while political liberals tend to be relatively more open to change and opposed to inequality within society.

The reason the above components of political ideology are psychologically, rather than logically, coherent is that they satisfy three social-cognitive motives: epistemic motives to reduce uncertainty, existential motives to manage threats, and relational motives to experience solidarity.[1] For example, the outcomes of political or social change are less certain than the existing or traditional political or social arrangements and the presence of inequality is far more common than equality. Consequently, a conservative ideology would best satisfy the needs of an individual who experiences the need to reduce uncertainty since resistance to change and the acceptance of inequality both provide greater certainty.

[1] This third motive has changed since Jost et al.'s original 2003 formulation (see Jost et al., 2008; Jost et al., 2009, for this more recent formulation).

The needs to reduce uncertainty, manage threats, and experience solidarity are general motivations which can be expressed and measured in a number of ways. Epistemic motives to reduce uncertainty include such constructs as ambiguity aversion, need for cognitive closure, and (reduced) integrative complexity. Existential motives to manage threats include such constructs as self-esteem maintenance, loss prevention, and terror management. Relational motives include such constructs as political socialization, group justification, and need for shared-reality. This model that Jost and his colleagues have created, in which political ideology is determined by social-cognitive motives, has been referred to as the motivated-social-cognition (MSC) model of conservatism (see Figure E1 for a visual representation of the model).

Political and Psychological Conservatism

The MSC model of conservatism is rooted within a larger dispute within political psychology regarding the relationship between psychological conservatism (i.e., cognitive rigidity) and political ideology. One position in the debate is the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, which posits that there is a positive correlation between psychological conservatism and political conservatism, such that individuals who are more conservative tend to be more cognitively rigid than individuals who are more liberal (e.g., Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003b). The MSC model of conservatism is a form of this hypothesis. A second position is the ideologue theory, which posits that the relationship between psychological conservatism and political ideology is curvilinear, such that cognitive rigidity increases as political ideology becomes more extreme for both liberals and conservatives (e.g., Greenberg & Jonas, 2003; Tetlock, 1984). The third position, context theory, also posits a curvilinear relationship between psychological conservatism and political ideology, but argues that political extremity is associated with increased cognitive *flexibility* (e.g., Sidanius, 1985, 1988). This theory argues that due to an increased interest, commitment, and involvement with politics, political partisans should

demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility (at least in regard to political issues) than political moderates.

The research on the relationship between political and psychological conservatism is mixed, but most consistently provides support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. For example, research on integrative complexity—the extent to which an individual can consider multiple characteristics or dimensions of an issue and connections between the dimensions—has provided support for all three theories. Tetlock (1989) found that political partisans exhibit less integrative complexity (re: more cognitive rigidity) than their moderate counterparts, providing evidence for the ideologue theory. However, conservatives also demonstrated less integrative complexity, such that partisan and moderate conservatives exhibited less integrative complexity than their liberal counterparts, providing evidence for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. Meanwhile, other research has provided evidence that political partisans demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility than political moderates (e.g., Sidanius, 1988; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2003), evidence consistent with context theory. While there has been mixed support for all three theories, a meta-analysis conducted by Jost and his colleagues (2003a) found a weighted mean effect size of -.20 between integrative complexity and political conservatism, providing clear support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis. The relationship between needs for order, structure, and closure—other measures of cognitive rigidity—and political ideology also provided support for the rigidity-of-the-right hypothesis, with a weighted mean average correlation of .26 between measures of these three motives and political conservatism. Following up on these correlations, Jost and his colleagues (Jost, Napier, Thórisdóttir, Gosling, Palfai, & Ostafin, 2007) demonstrated that a rigidity-of-the-right account explained the greatest proportion of the variance in political ideology. They also found limited, but inconsistent, support for context theory, and no support for the ideologue theory. These results have been replicated in cross-national samples of European countries (although some of the effects

are moderated in Eastern European countries; see Thórisdóttir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007).

Ideology Shifts

One advantage of viewing political ideology as motivated social cognition is that it can account for both stable differences in political ideologies across individuals and shifts in ideology, both at the individual and group-level. Because social-cognitive motives are susceptible to influence from contextual factors, an individual may identify as more or less conservative (or liberal) depending on situationally-induced changes in social-cognitive motives. One of the most well-worn demonstrations of this point is the finding that experiencing or recalling a threat causes individuals to exhibit increased political conservatism, both in terms of self-reported conservatism and in the expression of conservative values (e.g., Jost et al., 2007; Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, & Thompson, 2009; Wakslak, Jost, & Bauer, 2011). One particularly important set of studies demonstrated that the increased conservatism following a threat manipulation was mediated by an increase in close-mindedness, a facet of the epistemic motive need for cognitive closure (Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011).

Demonstrating how situational factors can influence shifts in an individual's ideology provides insight into how ideological shifts can occur at the group, or even national, level. Due to the increased degree of threat and uncertainty following local, regional, or national disasters, "conservative shifts" would be expected among individuals in the affected areas if political conservatism is a form of motivated social cognition. Numerous studies following the 9/11 terrorists attacks in the U.S. support this hypothesis, demonstrating an increased shift in support for conservative politicians and policies among Americans as a result of increased fear and uncertainty (see Huddy & Feldman, 2011 for a recent review). Experimental research has also demonstrated that recalling the 9/11 terrorist attacks leads to a conservative shift in attitudes (Bonanno &

Jost, 2006; Landau, Solomon, Greenberg, Cohen, Pyszczynski, Arndt, Miller, Ogilvie, & Cook, 2004), even among citizens of other countries (Ullrich & Cohrs, 2007).

Directionality: The Chicken or the Egg?

To summarize the previous research, individuals who experience baseline or temporarily increased needs to reduce uncertainty, manage threats, or experience solidarity are more likely to adopt a more conservative political ideology. While never explicitly stated, representations and discussions of the MSC model of conservatism present the relationship between motivation and political ideology as unidirectional, with the three social-cognitive motives shaping political ideology (see Figure E1). An unexplored possibility, which is the focus of the remainder of the paper, is that the relationship between social-cognitive motives and ideology is actually bidirectional. While experimental research exists demonstrating the causal impact of social-cognitive motives on political ideology (e.g., Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011), the lion's share of research on social-cognitive motives and political ideology is correlational in nature, opening up the possibility that political ideology may influence social-cognitive motives. To test this possibility, four studies were conducted in which the impact of political cues on the epistemic need to reduce uncertainty was assessed (see Figure E1). More specifically, these studies explored whether conservative cues result in increases in the epistemic motive of need for cognitive closure.

However, this raises the question of why one would expect exposure to political cues to influence social-cognitive motives. One way in which exposure to political cues might influence social-cognitive motives is through the activation of political stereotypes, which at least some individuals assimilate towards. In the context of the current studies, one hypothesis is that conservative cues prime the political stereotype that conservatives have a high need to reduce uncertainty. Is this hypothesis plausible though? Do lay people hold political stereotypes about conservatives and liberals and do these political

stereotypes include perceived differences in conservatives' and liberals' needs to reduce uncertainty? These are questions that will be addressed in the next section.

Political Stereotypes

As previously highlighted, political psychology has focused on what makes conservatives and liberals psychologically different in addition to ideologically different. As a result, we know quite a bit about the actual psychological differences between conservatives and liberals. What we know less about are *perceived* differences between conservatives and liberals. Put differently, do lay people hold political stereotypes regarding group differences between conservatives and liberals? It has actually only been in the last two decades that psychologists have made a concerted effort to explore this question. What this work has demonstrated is that individuals are quite accurate in their perceptions of the direction of the moral and ideological differences between conservatives and liberals, such as the fact that conservatives have higher concerns about purity violations than liberals (Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012), but that individuals tend to exaggerate the strength of these differences (Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006; Chambers & Melnyk, 2006; Graham et al., 2012; Judd & Park, 1993; Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995). In other words, while political stereotypes tend to reflect actual group differences between conservatives and liberals on ideological and moral values, people tend to over-estimate the extent to which conservatives and liberals disagree about the importance of these values.

Scherer and his colleagues (Scherer, Windschitl, & Graham, 2014) have extended this work on political stereotypes about ideological and moral values by examining whether lay people have political stereotypes regarding differences in social-cognitive motives between conservatives and liberals. This research demonstrates that not only do conservatives and liberals actually differ in the extent to which they are motivated by the three social-cognitive motives, but that individuals have political stereotypes that reflect,

but exaggerate, these differences. Most relevant for the current studies, participants' biases in their political stereotypes were primarily the result of over-estimating conservatives' motivations to reduce uncertainty, manage threats, and maintain the status quo, suggesting that individuals may have much stronger (re: more biased) stereotypes regarding conservatives than liberals (Scherer et al., 2014).

A growing body of research on non-political stereotypes has demonstrated that the priming of stereotypes can influence subsequent judgments and behaviors that are in line with the stereotype (see Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001; Wheeler & DeMarree, 2009, for reviews). For example, priming an African-American stereotype results in increased feelings of aggression, a trait stereotypically associated with African-Americans (DeMarree, Wheeler, & Petty, 2005). Critically, stereotype primes have been demonstrated to impact a wide variety of judgments and behaviors, including cognitive activities (e.g., math performance; Wheeler, Jarvis, & Petty, 2001), highlighting the potential for the activation of political stereotypes to influence measures that assess needs to reduce uncertainty.

Priming Politics

The research by Scherer and his colleagues (2014) highlight that political stereotypes regarding social-cognitive motives exist. However, to test whether political cues influence social-cognitive motives, the current studies needed a prime that has been demonstrated to prime conservatism and conservative stereotypes without directly priming the social-cognitive motive under examination.

While the discussion and measuring of political values has been a part of modern social psychology since its inception (e.g., Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1960; Rokeach, 1968), it is only recently that social psychologist have attempted to utilize political primes. For example, recent research has demonstrated that making the political value of meritocracy salient increases the endorsement of conservative political attitudes and

system justification (Bryan, Dweck, Ross, Kay, & Mislavsky, 2009; McCoy & Major, 2007). Additional research has demonstrated that even incidental features in our environment can serve as a political prime. In one study, participants who walked by a religious structure were more likely to express more conservative beliefs and report more negative attitudes towards non-Christians than individuals who walked by a non-religious structure. Surprisingly, these results were not moderated by personal belief in God (LaBouff, Rowatt, Johnson, & Finkle, 2012). Voting locations have also been demonstrated to exert an impact on voting behavior, such that voting in a church leads to increased voting for conservative candidates and opposition to same-sex marriage initiatives, while voting in a school increases voting for education funding initiatives (Berger, Meredith, & Wheeler, 2008; Rutchick, 2010).

Given that political priming is a relatively new area of research, there are only a few political primes that have been utilized. The most commonly used political prime has been exposure to the American flag. While the American flag is a national symbol, conservatives are more likely to display American flags (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008) and individuals associate brandishing the American flag more with the Republican Party (Carter, Ferguson, & Hassin, 2011a). Exposure to the American flag has been linked to increased conservative attitudes and voting behavior (Carter, Ferguson, & Hassin, 2011a), increased nationalism (but not patriotism; Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008), and other psychological phenomena associated with political conservatism such as system justification (Carter, Ferguson, & Hassin, 2011b) and Social Dominance Orientation (Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008), providing further evidence that exposure to the American flag primes conservative stereotypes, at least in regards to moral and ideological values. Since flag exposure has been the primary method of priming conservatism, exposure to the American flag was the primary political cue used in the current studies.

Need for Cognitive Closure and Selective Exposure

There are a number of psychological constructs that are associated with a motivation to reduce uncertainty (e.g., need for order, integrative complexity), but this proposal will focus on *need for cognitive closure*. Need for cognitive closure, hereafter referred to as NFCC, is the need (re: motivated tendency) towards desiring certainty and an aversion towards ambiguity (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Put differently, NFCC refers to the extent that an individual has the goal of achieving and maintaining definitive beliefs. One means of maintaining definitive beliefs is engaging in *selective exposure*. Selective exposure refers to our tendency to preferentially seek out information that is consistent with our pre-existing beliefs and attitudes or decisions we have made (see Hart, Albarracín, Eagley, Brechan, Lindberg, & Merrill, 2009 for a recent review and meta-analysis). Critically for this paper, selective exposure provides a method of reducing uncertainty (see Fischer, 2011).

Selective exposure provides a useful measure not just theoretically, but also from an applied standpoint. Lab studies have linked selective exposure to overconfidence (Scherer, Windschitl, O'Rourke, & Smith, 2012; Windschitl, Scherer, Smith, & Rose, 2013), suboptimal group decision-making (Kray & Galinsky, 2003), and the maintenance of stereotypes (e.g., Cameron & Trope, 2004). Additionally, selective exposure has been demonstrated to lead to diagnostic errors among physicians and psychiatrists (Kostopoulou, Mousoulis, & Delaney, 2009; Mendel, Traut-Mattausch, Jonas, Leucht, Kane, Maino, Kissling, & Hamann, 2011), the biased stock-following of financial investors (Karlsson, Loewenstein, & Seppi, 2009), and has been implicated in biased criminal investigations by police officers (e.g., Ask & Granhag, 2005). Consequently, using selective exposure as the means of measuring changes in NFCC following a political prime is important from both a theoretical and applied standpoint.

While the link between NFCC and selective exposure may seem obvious from a theoretical perspective, there has actually been very little research linking the two. In

their recent selective exposure meta-analysis, Hart and his colleagues (2009) included a "close-mindedness" factor, which is considered a facet of NFCC. Unfortunately, rather than including a standard measure of close-mindedness, this factor was a chimera of Dogmatism (Rokeach, 1960), Right-Wing Authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1996), and Repression-Sensitization (Byrne, 1964). Despite the inherent problems of this representation of close-mindedness containing more than just a desire to obtain cognitive closure, low, moderate, and high levels of close-mindedness were associated with increasing levels of selective exposure. Recent research by Hart and his colleagues has provided the first direct link between NFCC and selective exposure (Hart, Adams, Burton, Shreves, & Hamilton, 2012). Across a series of studies, individuals who were higher in NFCC, as measured by the Need for Cognitive Closure Scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), demonstrated both a preferential seeking of information that was consistent with their decision and an avoidance of information that was inconsistent with their decision. In other words, individual differences in NFCC were associated with the extent that individuals engage in selective exposure.

Hypotheses

As discussed, the primary design of the current studies involves measuring information seeking following exposure to the American flag. Shortly, I will provide brief descriptions of three accounts that make predictions regarding the effect of flag exposure on selective exposure, followed by more detailed descriptions of the three accounts. Prior to describing the accounts, I need to provide definitions for terms that I will use in relation to the accounts and throughout the rest of the proposal.

Earlier I noted that selective exposure refers to an information search in which confirmatory information is preferentially sought. However, the phrase "selective exposure" can technically refer to any information search in which one type of information is preferentially sought over another, meaning that there can be different

types of selective exposure. For example, if an individual reads more positive reviews than negative reviews of a recently purchased product, this could reflect selective exposure of confirmatory information or selective exposure of positive information (regardless of whether it is confirmatory or not). When referring to *selective exposure,* I am using it in the standard sense: a preferential selection of information that is consistent with existing beliefs or attitudes or with decisions that have been made. That being said, some of the accounts distinguish between *general selective exposure* and *political selective exposure*. General selective exposure refers to a general tendency to engage in selective exposure, regardless of the topic. Alternatively, political selective exposure refers to selective exposure that only occurs for political issues or content.

With the critical terms defined, I can now lay out the three accounts and the predictions they make regarding the impact of exposure to the American flag on selective exposure. Below are brief descriptions of the three accounts followed by more detailed discussions of the accounts.

Social Identity Account: Flag exposure will increase *political* selective exposure due to increased defense motivation by making political group membership salient.

Stereotype Priming Account: Flag exposure will increase *general* selective exposure by priming conservative stereotypes (re: higher NFCC) which individuals assimilate towards.

Active Self-Concept Account: Flag exposure will increase *general* selective exposure for conservatives, but result in unchanged or decreased selective exposure for liberals, due to assimilation (for conservatives) or disregard/contrast (for liberals) from the activated conservative stereotype.

Social Identity

The social identity account makes the most straightforward prediction regarding the impact of exposure to the American flag on selective exposure. Specifically, the social identity account predicts that exposure to the American flag makes one's political identity salient, resulting in increased selective exposure about political issues due to increased motivation to defend one's political in-group (see Figure E2). Social identity theory, from which the social identity account is derived, posits that an individual's self-concept is derived from both personal and social identities, with group memberships providing the individual with a source of pride and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; also see Goren, Federico, & Kittilson, 2009 for related explanation). As a result, reminders of a group membership can lead to increased in-group favoritism as a means of maintaining a positive self-image (e.g., Tajfel, 1974; Turner, 1975). In the context of the current studies, if exposure to the American flag acts as a reminder of one's political identity, then the social identity account predicts that the individual will experience an increased affiliation with and need to defend one's political in-group. When presented with information that supports or opposes one's in-group ideology, individuals will then defensively engage in selective exposure for information supporting the in-group ideology.

Unlike the other two accounts, which will be described shortly, the social identify account predicts that flag exposure will only increase selective exposure for political information. The motivation to defend one's political in-group represents a motivation that is specific to one context (i.e., politics). Previous research on selective exposure and threat has revealed that individuals engage in increased selective exposure in response to a threat, but only if the information seeking is relevant to the threat (Fischer, Kastenmüller, Greitemeyer, Fischer, Frey, & Crelley, 2011). As a result, the social identity account predicts that exposure to the American flag will result in increased political selective exposure, but not general selective exposure.

Stereotype Priming

The stereotype priming account captures the hypothesis that conservative cues prime conservative stereotypes which individuals assimilate towards (see Figure E2). In the context of the current studies, the stereotype priming account predicts that exposure to the American flag will prime conservative stereotypes; specifically the stereotype that conservatives are high in NFCC (Scherer et al., 2014). Assimilating towards this stereotype will result in the increased accessibility of NFCC, a trait associated with increased selective exposure (Hart et al., 2012), leading to increased selective exposure in information seeking contexts.

One of the upshots of the stereotype priming account is the prediction that exposure to the American flag should increase general selective exposure. NFCC represents a general tendency to seek and maintain certainty (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Consequently, if exposure to the American flag increases NFCC accessibility, then seeking out confirmatory information, regardless of whether the content is political or not, would satisfy the motivation to reduce uncertainty.

Active Self-Concept

The final account deviates from the previous two in that it predicts that exposure to the American flag will result in increased selective exposure, but only among conservatives. The active self-concept account is derived from the active self-concept account of priming. The active self-concept account of priming has demonstrated that one of the ways primes influence behavior is by making prime-related information more accessible in the active self-concept (see Wheeler & DeMarree, 2009). For example, priming the concept of "rude" may make information related to "rudeness" accessible in the individual's self-concept, causing them to act more rudely. Carter and his colleagues (2011a) have demonstrated that individuals associate the brandishing of the American flag more with the Republican Party. Consequently, exposure to the American flag may

cause "conservative" content to be more accessible in the individual's self-concept in the same way that priming the concept of "rude" may make "rudeness" more accessible. In this sense, the active self-concept account and the stereotype priming account are in agreement. Where the two accounts deviate is that the active self-concept account advocates that one's attitudes towards the stereotyped group moderate whether the individual assimilates, disregards, or contrasts away from the activated stereotype. One piece of evidence in support of this hypothesis is that following exposure to an "elderly" prime, individuals who had positive attitudes towards the elderly walked more slowly, indicating assimilation towards an activated elderly stereotype (i.e., elderly people are slow), while individuals who had negative attitudes towards the elderly walked more quickly, indicating contrast from the elderly stereotype (Cesario, Plaks, & Higgins, 2006: Study 2).

Within the context of the current studies, the active self-concept account predicts that exposure to the American flag activates "conservative" stereotypes, including high NFCC. Because conservatives presumably have positive attitudes towards conservatives, conservatives exposed to the American flag should assimilate towards the conservative stereotype of high NFCC, leading to increased selective exposure. Alternatively, because liberals presumably have ambivalent or negative attitudes towards conservatives, liberals exposed to the American flag should either be unaffected or contrast from the primed conservative stereotype of high NFCC, resulting in unchanged or decreased selective exposure (see Figure E2).

Accounts Summary

To summarize, the three accounts make different predictions regarding how exposure to the American flag should impact selective exposure (see Figure E2). The social identity and stereotype priming accounts predict that exposure to the American flag will increase selective exposure, while the active self-concept account predicts

differential effects of flag exposure on selective exposure depending on the individual's political ideology. Additionally, the stereotype priming and active self-concept accounts predict that flag exposure will increase general selective exposure, while the social identity account predicts flag exposure will only increase political selective exposure.

Overview of the Current Studies

Four studies were conducted to test the hypothesis that political cues influence NFCC. Study 1 provided an initial test of whether a political cue, the American flag, results in changes in selective exposure. Study 2 tested whether exposure to the American flag increases the accessibility of conservative political and psychological content. Study 3 tested whether exposure to the American flag increases general selective exposure. Study 4 tested the effects of a liberal prime on information seeking.

Study 1 was conducted to provide an initial test of the effect that exposure to a political cue would have on selective exposure. In Study 1, participants began the study by indicating their position on a number of political issues. Critically, for half of the participants, two American flags were displayed in the header. After indicating their attitudes, participants engaged in a selective exposure task where they were allowed to select information to read regarding three political issues.

Study 2 tested whether exposure to the American flag increases the accessibility of traits associated with conservative stereotypes (nationalism and NFCC), a result predicted by the stereotype priming and active self-concept accounts. Instead of using selective exposure as a proxy of NFCC, the accessibility of NFCC was directly measured. Participants sequentially responded to items measuring nationalism and patriotism, followed by NFCC and self-concept clarity. For half of the participants, two American flags appeared in the header as participants responded to the nationalism and patriotism items. Reaction times were recorded to measure the accessibility of each of the traits.

Study 3 served two primary aims. First, its design allowed for a conceptual replication of Study 1. Second, it tested whether the impact of exposure to the American flag results in increased selective exposure for non-political information, results which are predicted by the stereotype priming and active self-concept accounts. These two aims were tested by having participants engage in a political or non-political (artwork) selective exposure task.

The primary purpose of Study 4 was to provide the most direct test between the social identity and stereotype priming accounts by introducing a liberal prime. To this end, participants in Study 4 were exposed to the news logo of a moderate, conservative, or liberal news source. If the stereotype priming account is correct, then individuals in the conservative news source condition should engage in more selective exposure than individuals in the control and liberal news source conditions. Alternatively, if the social identity account is correct, then individuals in both the conservative and liberal news source conditions should engage in more selective exposure than the control condition.

All together these studies will provide a strong test of whether political cues can increase NFCC. Specifically, these studies will test whether exposure to the American flag increases the accessibility of traits associated with conservative stereotypes (nationalism and NFCC) and increased engagement in selective exposure.

CHAPTER 1
EFFECT OF FLAG EXPOSURE ON INFORMATION SEEKING

A fair amount of research exists demonstrating that increased NFCC is associated with and leads to an increased endorsement of conservative political ideology (see Jost et al., 2011, for a recent review). An unexplored, and potentially more interesting question, is whether priming conservative ideology leads to increased NFCC. Study 1 was designed as an initial test of this question by examining the impact of exposure to the American flag, a symbol previously demonstrated to prime political conservatism (e.g., Carter at al., 2011a), on selective exposure. As previously discussed, higher NFCC has been linked to higher levels of selective exposure (Hart et al., 2012). Participants began the study by indicating their attitudes on a number of political issues. Critically, the header at the top of the screen featured the presence or absence of two American flags. After indicating their political attitudes, participants were given an opportunity to select additional information to read on three separate political issues (abortion, social security, and immigration). Participants concluded the study by reading the comments they had selected and responding to a number of secondary dependent measures, individual difference measures, and providing demographic information.

As a reminder, both the social identity and stereotype priming accounts predict that exposure to the American flag should lead to increased selective exposure, while the active self-concept account predicts that American flag exposure should lead to increased selective exposure for conservatives, but unchanged or decreased selective exposure for liberals.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants (N = 159) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) service (www.mturk.com). Previous research has demonstrated that data obtained from

MTurk participants do not significantly differ in reliability compared to data obtained from participants run in the lab (e.g., Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Participants were randomly assigned to a flags (n = 78) or control (re: no flags; n = 81) condition and to one of the three political issue presentation orders (as a counter-balance). Therefore, Study 1 utilized a 2 (flag condition: flags or no flags) x 3 (issue order: abortion first, social security first, or immigration first) x 3 (political issue: abortion, social security, immigration) mixed-subjects design, with the last factor being a within-subject factor.[2]

The sample was 47.1% female and had a mean age of 32.0 (*SD* = 12.7). The sample was predominantly White (78.5%). Individuals who identified as Black (7.6%), Asian (5.7%), or Hispanic (3.8%) made up a majority of the rest of the sample. A majority of the sample were registered Democrats (42.1%), followed by Independents (36.5%), and Republicans (11.9%). 9.4% of the respondents were either not registered to vote or did not provide a response to which party they were registered with.

Procedures

Unless noted otherwise, all surveys were created and run using Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com). After being directed to the survey, participants indicated the extent that they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements on political issues taken from Carter, Ferguson, and Hassin (2011a; see Appendix A for full listing of issues). For all participants, a header appeared at the top of the survey where the phrase "Political Attitudes" was displayed. For participants in the flags condition, an American flag (155 x 82 pixels) was displayed on both sides of the phrase "Political Attitudes" (see Figure E3), while no flags were displayed for participants in the control (no flags) condition.

[2] While the design technically has three factors, it was predicted that there would be no significant differences across the different levels of the issue order factor and no predicted interaction between flag condition and political issue.

Immediately after indicating their political attitudes, participants were given an opportunity to select information to read regarding three separate political issues (restricting access to abortions, privatizing social security, or freezing immigration to the U.S.; see *Measures*). After selecting information to read regarding the three political issues, participants read the information they had selected.

Participants then completed a number of secondary dependent measures derived from measures used in Carter et al. (2011a) to assess evaluations of conservatives and liberals. These measures included the approval ratings of the President, House of Representatives, and the Senate; the likelihood of voting for the Democratic presidential nominee, Barack Obama; the likelihood of voting for the Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney; and which candidate they planned on voting for in the 2012 Presidential Election. Participants also responded to a number of items meant to measure political knowledge, which has been demonstrated to moderate some of the effects of American flag exposure in other studies (Carter et al., 2011b; Ferguson & Hassin, 2007). These measures included interest in politics; self-reported knowledge about politics; self-reported comparative knowledge of politics; and political news exposure. Participants concluded the study by providing a number of measures of political affiliation such as registered political party, political philosophy, and political ideology; providing additional demographic information (gender, age, and ethnicity); completing measures of system justification and NFCC; and indicating whether they associated the American flag more with one political party over the other.

Measures

Information Selections and Calculation of Selective Exposure

Information selections were made from an "information buffet". Each information buffet contained the titles to twelve comments that indicated support for the conservative or liberal position on the issue. For example, if the political issue was abortion, there

were six titles to comments that advocated for a Pro-Life position and six titles to comments that advocated for a Pro-Choice position (see Appendix B). The titles for each information buffet were presented in a random order for each participant. Participants were told to click the box next to the titles that they would like to read more about. The survey was programmed so that participants had to select at least one title in order to advance. The political issue presentation order was counter-balanced across participants.

Selective exposure was measured by calculating a selection bias in the information selections. The selection bias was calculated by dividing the total number of titles selected that were consistent with that individual's position (as reported on the attitude measures at the beginning of the study) by the total number of titles selected. Consequently, values above 50% indicate selective exposure towards confirmatory information; values below 50% indicate selective exposure towards disconfirmatory information; and values at 50% indicate unbiased information seeking. Since responding at the midpoint of an attitude measure of a political issue did not indicate a clear preference for or against the political issue, selection biases were not calculated for a particular political issue if the individual selected the midpoint of the scale on the issue for the corresponding information buffet.

Political Attitudes

Participants indicated their agreement with a number of political policies on a seven-point scale with the verbal anchors of "Completely Disagree" (1) and "Completely Agree" (7). See Appendix A for a full list of the political policies. When appropriate, political attitude items were recoded so that higher values indicated more conservative attitudes. The attitude items were highly reliable ($\alpha = .81$), so the items were averaged to create an average political attitude measure.

Political Ideology

Political ideology was measured via a single, 10-point item where participants placed themselves on a liberalism-conservatism scale with the verbal anchors of "Extremely liberal" (-5) and "Extremely conservative" (+5) and no midpoint.

Extremity

The political attitude items and political ideology were recoded so that higher values indicated more extreme attitudes. For the political attitude items, 4 (the midpoint of the scale) was recoded as '0', 3 and 5 were recoded as '1', 2 and 6 were recoded as '2', and 1 and 7 were recoded as '3'. Political ideology was recoded by using the absolute value of their political ideology response (e.g., -2 was recoded as 2). Consequently, political attitude extremity scores ranged from 0-3, with 3 being the most extreme, and political ideology extremity scores ranged from 1-5, with 5 being the most extreme.

Political Job Approval and Voting Intentions

Participants indicated to what extent they approved or disapproved how well the President, the Senate, and House of Representatives were doing their jobs on a 0-100 point scale, where 0 = Completely disapprove and 100 = Completely approve. Participants also indicated the likelihood that they would vote for Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in the upcoming election on a 0-100% scale, as well as whether they planned on voting for Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, neither candidate, or were undecided.

Subjective Political Knowledge

Subjective political knowledge was measured via four items. Political interest was measured by having participants indicate their level of interest in politics on a seven-point scale (1-7), where higher values indicated greater interest in politics. Perceived knowledge was measured by having participants indicate how knowledgeable they

thought they were about politics on a seven-point scale (1-7), where higher values indicated greater knowledge about politics. Comparative knowledge was measured by having participants indicate how knowledgeable they thought they were about politics compared to the average person on a seven-point scale ranging from "Extremely Less Knowledgeable" (1) to "Extremely More Knowledgeable" (7) and "Equally Knowledgeable" (4) as the scale midpoint. The final item measured political news exposure by having participants indicate how often they sought out "information (via websites, television, magazine articles, etc.) about politics." Responses included never, less than once a month, once a month, 2-3 times a month, once a week, 2-3 times a week, and daily. Responses were coded such that never = 1 to daily = 7.

Interest in politics, reported self-knowledge, comparative knowledge, and political information seeking were highly reliable ($\alpha = .90$), so the four measures were averaged to create a subjective political knowledge measure, with values ranging from 1-7, with higher scores indicating higher subjective political knowledge. The subjective political knowledge measure was mean-centered and an interaction variable between flag condition and mean-centered subjective political knowledge was created to test for possible interactions between political knowledge and flag condition.

Close-Mindedness

Close-mindedness was measured using the eight items comprising the close-mindedness subscale of the NFCC Scale ($\alpha = .68$; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a six-point scale, with the verbal labels of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), somewhat disagree (3), somewhat agree (4), agree (5), or strongly agree (6). Five of the items were reverse-coded so that higher scores reflect higher close-mindedness and the responses to the items were summed, with a possible range of 8-48.

System Justification

System justification was measured using the System Justification Scale ($\alpha = .84$; Kay & Jost, 2003). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a nine-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (9) to "Strongly Agree" (1). Two of the items were reverse coded so that lower scores indicated higher system justification and the items were summed, with a possible range of 8-72.

Flag Association

After providing demographic information, participants were asked which political party they "believe tends to brandish the American flag more often (e.g., by wearing it, waving it, holding it, having it on their house)", with possible responses of "Democratic Party", "Neither", and "Republican Party" (taken from Carter et al., 2011a).

Awareness Checks

At the end of the study, participants were asked to think back to when they reported their political attitudes and to report whether American flags were present on the screen or not. Participants could respond "Yes", "No", or "I don't remember". Participants were also asked what, if any, effect exposure to the American flag would have on how they responded during the study.

Results

Awareness Check

Of the participants in the flags condition, 33 (43.4%) correctly identified that there were flags on the screen, 11 (14.5%) incorrectly indicated that there were no flags on the screen, and 32 (42.1%) indicated that they couldn't remember whether there were flags or not. Of the participants in the control condition, 36 (45.0%) correctly identified that there were no flags on the screen, three (3.8%) incorrectly indicated that there were

flags on the screen, and 41 (51.3%) indicated that they couldn't remember whether there were flags or not. Three participants did not provide responses.

Flag Association

65.2% of the sample reported that they associated the American flag more with the Republican party, 8.9% with the Democratic party, and 25.9% associated the flag equally with both parties. These results corroborate previous research demonstrating the individuals tend to associate the American flag more with the Republican Party (Carter et al., 2011a).

Selective Exposure

Overall, participants engaged in significant levels of selective exposure (M = 74.4%, SD = 25.2), $t(156) = 12.16$, $p < .001$. There was no main effects of issue presentation order, $p = .33$, but a significant main effect of political issue on selective exposure, $p = .001$. Selective exposure was significantly larger for abortion (M = 82.9%, SD = 30.7) compared to social security (M = 71.5%, SD = 37.7), $p = .02$, and immigration (M = 68.0%, SD = 39.0), $p < .001$. Selective exposure for social security and immigration were not significantly different from each other, $p = .24$. Despite the differences in magnitude across political issues, there were no significant interactions between political issue, issue presentation order, and flag condition, ps > .51, so results will be collapsed across buffets for ease of presentation. Participants exposed to the American flag engaged in greater amounts of selective exposure (M = 78.5%, SD = 21.5) than participants who were not exposed to the American flag (M = 70.6%, SD = 27.7), $t(155) = 1.98$, $p = .05$. The impact of the American flag on selective exposure did not differ between liberals (M_{diff} = 8.2%) and conservatives (M_{diff} = 7.3%), $F(1, 105) = 0.54$, $p = .46$.

Political Attitudes and Extremity

Not surprisingly, conservatives reported more conservative stances on political issues (M = 4.50, SD = 1.15) than liberals (M = 2.63, SD = 1.07), $t(156) = 10.04$, $p < .001$. The reported attitudes of individuals in the flags condition (M = 3.27, SD = 1.09) were no more conservative than individuals in the control condition (M = 3.24, SD = 1.27), $t(157) = 0.13$, $p = .90$.

Participants in the flags condition did not exhibit more extreme political attitudes, $t(157) = -1.33$, $p = .19$, or ideological affiliation, $t(156) = 0.14$, $p = .89$, compared to participants in the control condition (see Table D1). It is worth nothing that liberals and conservatives did not differ in the extremity of their political attitudes, $t(156) = 1.26$, $p = .21$, but liberals (M = 2.85, SD = 1.27) demonstrated more extreme political ideology relative to conservatives (M = 2.31, SD = 1.27), $t(156) = 2.48$, $p = .01$.

Approval Ratings and Voting Intentions

Not surprisingly, liberals in the sample gave higher approval ratings for President Obama's job performance and reported a higher likelihood of voting for Barack Obama in the upcoming election compared to conservatives, ps < .001, while conservatives gave higher approval ratings for the Republican-controlled House of Representatives and reported a higher likelihood of voting for Mitt Romney compared to liberals, ps < .05 (see Table D2). Conservatives and liberals did not differ in their approval rating of the Senate, $p = .25$. Approximately 49.0% of conservatives reported that they planned on voting for Mitt Romney, while 76.6% of liberals reported that they planned on voting for Barack Obama. Interestingly, 29.4% of the conservatives in the sample reported that they planned on voting for Barack Obama.

Exposure to the American flag did not change evaluations of political groups or voting intentions (see Table D2 for means). Approval for the President was slightly above 50% for participants in the flags and control conditions, while approval for both the

Republican-controlled House of Representatives and the Democratic-controlled Senate was close to 30% for participants in both conditions, *p*s > .33. Additionally, there were no significant differences in the reported likelihood of voting for Barack Obama or percentage of participants intending to vote for Barack Obama across the two conditions, *p*s > .89. This lack of significant differences between the two conditions was also reflected in the reported likelihood and intentions of voting for Mitt Romney, *p*s > .21.

Curiously, liberal participants were marginally less likely to approve of President Obama's job performance and were marginally less likely to vote for Barack Obama in the flags condition ($M_{approve}$ = 64.4%, *SD* = 24.0; M_{prob} = 72.4%, *SD* = 36.7) compared to the control condition ($M_{approve}$ = 72.3%, *SD* = 17.4; M_{prob} = 84.0%, *SD* = 26.4), *p*s = .054 and .06, respectively. Additionally, conservatives were also marginally more likely to vote for Barack Obama and intended to vote for Barack Obama in the flags condition (M_{prob} = 41.7%, *SD* = 43.0; M_{vote} = 42%, *SD* = 50.4) compared to the control condition (M_{prob} = 21.0%, *SD* = 34.5; M_{vote} = 19%, *SD* = 40.0), *p*s = .06 and .07, respectively.

Individual Differences and Political Knowledge

The mean score for the NFCC close-mindedness subscale was 23.7 (*SD* = 5.1) and the mean system justification score was 44.2 (*SD* = 11.4). Exposure to the American flag did not increase close-mindedness, $p = .80$, or system justification, $p = .87$ (see Table D2). Contrary to prior research (Hart et al., 2009, 2012), close-mindedness was not significantly correlated with selective exposure, $r(153) = .06$, $p = .44$. Subjective political knowledge also did not differ between participants in the flags and control conditions, $t(156) = 1.22$, $p = .22$ (see Table D2), and the interaction between flag condition and political knowledge on selective exposure was not significant, $p = .29$.

Exploratory Analyses

Effects of Awareness and Flag Affiliation

While awareness of the flags condition they were in did not significantly interact with flag condition for selective exposure, $p = .19$, analyzing participants who were aware of which condition they were in (n = 69) versus those who did not (n = 89) yielded an interesting result. Specifically, exposure to the American flag produced significantly higher levels of selective exposure for individuals who were not aware of which condition they were in, $p = .02$, but led to no significant differences among individuals who were aware of which condition they were in, $p = .76$. Awareness of the condition did not produce different results for any of the other measures see (Table D3).

Similar to awareness, while associating the American flag with the Republican Party did not significantly interact with flag condition for selective exposure, $p = .39$, analyzing participants who associated the American flag with the Republican Party (n = 102) versus those who did not (n = 54) yielded an interesting result. Specifically, exposure to the American flag produced significantly higher levels of selective exposure for individuals who associated the American flag with the Republican Party, $p = .05$, but was not significantly different among individuals who did not associate the American flag with the either party or with the Democratic Party, $p = .69$ (see Table D4). An additional difference was that exposure to the American flag *decreased* conservative attitudes among individuals who did not associate the American flag with the Republican Party, $p = .02$, but had no significant effect on individuals who associated the American flag with the Republican Party, $p = .20$. Flag affiliation did not produce different results for any of the other measures (see Table D4).

Close-mindedness, Selective Exposure, and Flag Condition

While scores on the close-mindedness subscale of the NFCC scale were uncorrelated with selective exposure when looking at the full sample, an interesting

pattern emerged when looking at the correlations between close-mindedness and selective exposure for participants in the two flags conditions separately. For participants in the control condition, the correlation between close-mindedness and selective exposure was non-significant, $r(79) = -.07$, $p = .53$. Alternatively, for participants in the flags condition, the correlation between close-mindedness and selective exposure was positive and significant, $r(74) = .23$, $p = .05$. In other words, despite not experiencing an increase in their reported close-mindedness, participants in the flags condition experienced an increased coupling between close-mindedness and selective exposure in the flags condition.

Discussion

In this first study, exposure to the American flag resulted in significantly higher levels of selective exposure. Additionally, these effects were equally strong for both conservatives and liberals in the study. These results are consistent with the predictions of the social identity and stereotype priming accounts, but inconsistent with the active self-concept account, which predicted that exposure to the American flag would increase selective exposure for conservatives, but not liberals.

The extremity measures also allowed a test of the social identity account. As a reminder, the social identity account predicted that exposure to the American flag should increase political selective exposure due to increased identification with one's political in-group and motivation to defend one's group. Consequently, the social identity account predicted that individuals who were exposed to the American flag should demonstrate increased political group identification and/or political attitude extremity. Contrary to this, individuals in the flags condition did not identify more strongly with their political in-group or exhibit more extreme political attitudes.

In summary, exposure to the American flag resulted in significantly higher selective exposure; this effect was not moderated by political ideology; and flag exposure

did not result in increased political extremity. These three findings are most consistent with the stereotype priming account.

Before moving on to Study 2, it is worth noting two curious findings. First, the effect of flag exposure on selective exposure produced different effects depending on the participant's awareness of which condition they were in. The finding that awareness might change the impact of flag exposure on selective exposure is not that surprising, given other research demonstrating that individuals often attempt to correct for the influence of a prime when they are aware of the possible biasing effects of the prime (e.g., Lombardi, Higgins, & Bargh, 1987; Martin, Seta, & Crelia, 1990; Wegener & Petty, 1995). This explanation becomes less plausible though given that no participants guessed the hypothesized contingency between exposure to the American flag and information seeking. Specifically, most participants thought that exposure to the American flag would have no effect on any responses throughout the study or, if it did have an effect, it would simply make individuals more patriotic without elaborating on how increased patriotism might influence responding in the study. Four participants (out of 159) said that exposure to the American flag might influence a person's existing beliefs, with three participants speculating that American flag exposure might make individuals more conservative and one participant speculating that the American flag might make individuals more entrenched in their beliefs, the closest anyone got to explicating the key contingency that was tested in the study. In other words, no one mentioned information seeking, suggesting that it is unlikely that bias correction can account for the discrepancy in selective exposure findings between the two awareness groups.

Second, while there was a significant effect of flag exposure on selective exposure, there was a failure to replicate the finding that exposure to the American flag results in increased conservative attitudes, less favorable evaluations of Democrats and more favorable evaluations of Republicans, and increased voting intentions for

conservative candidates (Carter et al., 2011a) or in increased system justification (Carter et al., 2011b). It may be worth noting that due to the ending of the Iraq War in 2011, a support of the Iraq War measure that was included in the original political attitudes inventory (Carter et al., 2011a) was not included in the current study. Previous research has demonstrated that exposure to the American flag increases aggression (Ferguson & Hassin, 2007) and increased NFCC is associated with increased support for military action (Federico, Golec, & Dial, 2005). Consequently, dropping the support for the war in Iraq measure may provide one plausible explanation for a lack of significant differences in political attitudes between the flags and control conditions. Additionally, an item regarding privatizing social security was added to the political attitude measures, as it was one of the information buffet issues. The results did not significantly improve when analyzing political attitudes without the social security measure (M_{flags} = 3.07, SD = 1.12; $M_{control}$ = 3.21, SD = 1.28), $t(157) = -0.71$, $p = .48$.

CHAPTER 2
IMPACT OF FLAG EXPOSURE ON NATIONALISM AND NFCC

The results of Study 1 indicate that exposure to the American flag increases NFCC as measured through increased selective exposure. Study 2 examined the effect of flag exposure on the accessibility of NFCC, rather than selective exposure, and tests another of the causal links in the stereotype priming and active self-concept accounts, specifically the link between exposure to the American flag and increased NFCC accessibility. In Study 2, participants completed measures of nationalism, patriotism, NFCC, and self-concept clarity. As in Study 1, half the participants were exposed to the American flag, while the other half were not. In addition to item responses, reaction times were recorded as participants responded to the scale items to measure the accessibility of the traits being measured.

If the stereotype priming and active self-concept accounts are correct, then exposure to the American flag should increase the accessibility of political and psychological traits associated with conservatives (nationalism and NFCC), resulting in faster response times to items that measure those traits, but should result in no changes in response times for traits not associated with conservatives (patriotism and self-concept clarity). Broadly speaking, the more accessible a trait is, the more quickly individuals respond to items measuring that trait or goal, regardless of the actual responses to the items. Because scale responses and response times are not perfectly correlated, it is possible for two individuals with the same score on a scale to have different accessibility for the trait being measured. The more accessible a trait is, the more likely it is to exert an influence over thoughts, judgments, and behaviors (see DeMarree, Petty, & Strunk, 2010, for a discussion of the previous points and testing applied to self-esteem). Consequently, measuring changes in the accessibility of nationalism and NFCC may be more important for assessing whether flag exposure activates conservative stereotypes than the actual responses to the trait items.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants (N = 85) were University of Iowa students from introductory psychology courses. Participants were randomly assigned to a flags (n = 43) or control (n = 42) condition. The sample was 61.2% female and had a mean age of 19.6 (*SD* = 2.3). The sample was predominantly White (61.2%). Individuals who identified as Black (4.7%), Asian (21.2%), or Hispanic (9.4%) made up a majority of the rest of the sample. A majority of the sample identified more with the Democratic Party (68.2%; 9.4% strongly identified with the Democratic Party) or as liberals (67.1%, 4.7% strongly identified as liberal). A minority of the sample identified more with the Republican Party (31.8%; 3.5% strongly identified with the Republican Party) or as conservatives (32.9%; 2.4% strongly identified as conservatives).

Materials and Procedures

The bulk of Study 2 utilized DirectRT (http://www.empirisoft.com/directrt.aspx) due to its ability to accurately record response times with a high degree of precision. Participants began the study by completing measures of nationalism and patriotism. Participants answered each scale item sequentially, with a "Political Attitudes" header containing two American flags or no flags appearing at the top of the screen for each item of the nationalism and patriotism scales. After completing the measures of nationalism and patriotism, participants completed measures of NFCC and self-concept clarity. As with the nationalism and patriotism measures, participants responded to one item at a time in order to record response times for each item. The header for the NFCC and self-concept clarity items contained the word "Personality" at the top of the screen with no other images in the header. Participants concluded the study in Qualtrics by providing demographic information, indicating what they thought the purpose of the study was,

whether they saw flags on the screens or not, and hypothesizing regarding the effect of flag exposure on their responses.

Measures

Need for Cognitive Closure

NFCC was measured using the Brief Need for Cognitive Closure Scale (α = .82; Roets & Van Hiel, 2011), which contains 15 items from the full Need for Cognitive Closure Scale (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a six-point scale, with the verbal labels of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), somewhat disagree (3), somewhat agree (4), agree (5), or strongly agree (6). The responses to the items were summed, with a possible range of 15-90. Higher values indicate higher NFCC.

Nationalism-Patriotism

The Nationalism subscale contains eight items (α = .53), while the Patriotism subscale (α = .66) contains 12 items of the Nationalism-Patriotism Scale (Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a five-point scale, with the verbal labels of strongly disagree (1), moderately disagree (2), neutral, moderately agree (4), or strongly agree (5). One of the nationalism items was reverse-coded and five of the patriotism items were reverse-coded, so that higher values indicate higher nationalism or patriotism. After recoding the appropriate responses, the responses to the items were summed, with a possible range of 8-40 for nationalism and 12-48 for patriotism. Previous research has demonstrated that exposure to the American flag increases nationalism, but not patriotism (Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008), and that higher NFCC is associated with increased nationalism (Federico et al., 2005). As a result, exposure to the American flag should decrease reaction times for nationalism, but not patriotism.

Self-Concept Clarity Scale

The Self-Concept Clarity Scale (Campell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996) contains 12 items ($\alpha = .89$). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a 6-point scale, with the verbal anchors of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). All but one of the items were reverse-coded and the responses to the items were summed, with a possible range of 12-72. Higher values indicate higher self-concept clarity.

Reaction Times

Reaction times were transformed using an inverse-transformation (1/x) for analyses. Inverse-transformations of reaction time data have been demonstrated to normalize data with minimal impacts on the power of the analyses (see Ratcliff, 1993). Transformed reaction times that were greater than three standard deviations above or below the mean transformed reaction time were eliminated from analyses. When presenting results, the means will be presented in seconds (i.e., non-transformed) to ease the interpretation of the results.

As a reminder, if the stereotype priming account is correct, then exposure to the American flag should decrease the reaction times of traits stereotypically associated with conservatives—nationalism and NFCC—but should result in no significant changes in reaction times for traits not stereotypically associated with conservatives—patriotism and self-concept clarity.

Extremity

Rather than reporting registered political party affiliation, participants in Study 2 indicated the extent to which they identified with the two political parties on a 10-point scale ranging from “Strongly Democratic” (-5) to “Strongly Republican” (5). Participants also indicated their political ideology on the same 10-point scale used in Study 1. Consequently, political party extremity and political ideology extremity were calculated

by taking the absolute value of participant responses to these two items, with values ranging from 1-5 and higher values indicating more extremity.

Results

Awareness Check

Of the participants in the flags condition, 25 (58.1%) correctly identified that there were flags on the screen, five (11.6%) incorrectly indicated there that were no flags on the screen, and 13 (30.2%) indicated that they couldn't remember whether there were flags or not. Of the participants in the control condition, 14 (33.3%) correctly identified that there were no flags on the screen, zero (0.0%) incorrectly indicated that there were flags on the screen, and 28 (66.7%) indicated that they couldn't remember whether there were flags or not.

Scores and Accessibility

Mean scale scores and response times are presented in Table D5. Exposure to the American flag did not result in significantly larger NFCC, $t(83) = 0.70$, $p = .49$, nationalism, $t(83) = 0.92$, $p = .36$, patriotism, $t(83) = 0.82$, $p = .41$, or self-concept clarity, $t(83) = 0.11$, $p = .91$, scores. More importantly, exposure to the American flag did not result in faster response times to NFCC, $t(83) = -1.09$, $p = .28$, nationalism, $t(83) = -1.53$, $p = .13$, patriotism, $t(83) = -0.41$, $p = .68$, or self-concept clarity, $t(83) = -0.99$, $p = .33$, scale items.

NFCC was negatively correlated with overall average reaction time, $r(82) = -.25$, $p = .02$. Interestingly, NFCC was not significantly correlated with reaction times for participants in the control condition, $r(41) = -.20$, $p = -.21$, while NFCC was negatively correlated with reaction times for participants in the flags condition, $r(40) = -.32$, $p = .04$.

Extremity

Liberals and conservatives did not significantly differ on the two measures of extremity, *p*s > .46. Additionally, ideology did not interact with flag condition on the extremity measures, *p*s > .62, so subsequent analyses will be collapsed across ideology. Participants in the flag condition did not report more extreme party affiliations or political ideologies compared to participants in the control condition, *p*s > .54 (see Table D5).

Effects of Awareness

Awareness of the condition they were in interacted with flag condition for NFCC, $p = .04$, nationalism, $p = .11$, and self-concept clarity, $p = .04$, reaction times, but not patriotism response times, $p = .88$. These interactions for NFCC, nationalism, and self-concept clarity were due to reduced reaction times for participants in the flags condition compared to participants in the control condition for individuals who were unaware of which condition they were in, while response times were not significantly different between the two conditions for participants who were aware of which condition they were in (see Table D6 for means).

There were no significant differences between the conditions on any of the other variables of interest for individuals who were aware of the condition they were in, *p*s > .32, with the exception of participants in the flags condition having marginally less extreme reported ideology compared to participants in the control condition, $t(37) = -1.82$, $p = .08$.

Discussion

At first glance the results of Study 2 seem disappointing with no overall effect of flag exposure on the reaction times to nationalism and NFCC items. However, one of the expressions of NFCC is the increased speed with which one makes a decision or arrives at a conclusion (Kruglanski & Webster, 1994), a result that was consistent with the

negative correlation between NFCC and average response time found in Study 2. Additionally, this relationship between NFCC and reaction times was stronger for individuals in the flags condition, suggesting that exposure to the American flag increased the relationship between the *reporting* of NFCC and the *expression* of NFCC, similar to the way that exposure to the American Flag increased the correlation between NFCC and selective exposure in Study 1.

Another finding that was parallel to those found in Study 1 was the significant interaction between flag condition and awareness on reaction times for nationalism and NFCC. Specifically, participants who were not aware of which condition they were in responded more quickly to the nationalism and NFCC items when exposed to the American flag. Curiously, these participants also responded more quickly to the self-concept clarity items. As a reminder, the stereotype priming account predicted that exposure to the American flag should decrease reaction times for the "conservative traits" of nationalism and NFCC, but have no effect on reaction times for patriotism and self-concept clarify. One potential explanation for the self-concept clarity reaction time results is that political stereotypes might exist regarding differences in self-concept clarity between conservatives and liberals. Previous research examining trait differences between conservatives and liberals has not examined whether conservatives and liberals differ in their levels of self-concept clarity, much less whether lay people hold political stereotypes regarding self-concept clarity differences. The current study also has no data to shed light on the political stereotype issue. However, conservatives in the current study did have significantly higher self-concept clarity (M = 48.4, SD = 9.4) than the liberals in the study (M = 41.4, SD = 10.8), $t(83) = 2.93$, $p = .004$, opening up the possibility that political stereotypes might exist regarding self-concept clarity, in addition to nationalism and NFCC.

On a final note, there was the curious failure to replicate the previous finding that exposure to the American flag increases feelings of nationalism, as measured via the

nationalism items (Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008). However, due to the large methodological differences between the original study (questions presented together) and the current study (questions presented sequentially), it is unclear how much should be made of this failure to replicate.

CHAPTER 3
DOES THE EFFECT OF FLAG EXPOSURE ON SELECTIVE EXPOSURE GENERALIZE?

Study 1 demonstrated that exposure to the American flag increased selective exposure for both liberals and conservatives, but did not increase identification with one's political in-group or political attitude extremity. Study 2 provided some evidence that NFCC and nationalism became more accessible after exposure to the American flag, but only among individuals who are unaware of the flag exposure. Overall, these pattern of results are most consistent with the stereotype priming account. Study 3 was designed to test another proposition of the stereotype priming and active self-concept accounts; whether the effect of flag exposure on selective exposure is specific to political information or whether it generalizes to non-political information.

In Study 3, participants were told that they were completing a study on political and aesthetic values. As in Study 1, participants began the study by indicating their support or opposition to a number of public policies, complete with the same flag exposure manipulation as Study 1. After completing these measures, participants completed a political judgment task or an aesthetic judgment task that included opportunities to select additional information to read. To minimize the use of deception in the cover story, all participants made a number of aesthetic judgments following the selective exposure task.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants (N = 490) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) service. The sample was 52.1% female and had a mean age of 35.3 (*SD* = 13.0). The sample was predominantly White (77.1%). Individuals who identified as Black (9.0%), Asian (6.1%), or Hispanic (4.3%) made up a majority of the rest of the sample. A majority of the sample identified more with the Democratic Party (68.2%; 16.7% strongly

identified with the Democratic Party) or as liberals (64.7%, 13.5% strongly identified as liberal). A minority of the sample identified more with the Republican Party (31.8%; 3.9% strongly identified with the Republican Party) or as conservatives (35.3%; 3.7% strongly identified as conservatives). Study 3 utilized a 2 (flag condition: present or absent) x 2 (information type: political or artistic) between-subjects design.

Materials and Procedures

Participants in Study 3 began by receiving the cover story that the purpose of the study was to examine political and aesthetic values. After reading the instructions, participants indicated their support or opposition to a number of public policies. As in Study 1, flag exposure was manipulated via a header at the top of the screen. Following completion of the political attitude measures, the content of the procedures diverged for the political and artistic information groups, but structurally participants completed a similar task. Participants in the political information condition made judgments regarding which of two political policies (e.g., keeping abortion legal vs. making abortion illegal) would be better for the country. After making their judgment, participants were given an information buffet related to that issue, with the information purportedly from policy experts. The issues and information buffets were the same as those used in Study 1, with the exception of same-sex marriage benefits replacing immigration. Participants in the artwork information condition made a judgment regarding which of two artworks they thought was the better artwork. After making their judgment, participants were given an information buffet that contained assessments of the two artworks, with the information purportedly from art critics. The artwork and information buffets that were used for the artwork information condition were from a previously used selective exposure paradigm (Scherer, Windschitl, & Smith, 2013; Windschitl et al., 2013). After participants made their judgments and information selections for three sets of issues or artwork, they read the full comments for the titles they had selected.

To minimize the use of deceit, all participants completed five items from the Art Reception Scale (Hager, Hagemann, Danner, & Schankin, 2012) regarding the two paintings used in the artwork judgment task. Participants concluded the study by providing demographic information; objective political knowledge (modified from Federico et al., 2012) and political information consumption; and indicating whether they associated the American flag more with one political party over the other.

Measures

Selective Exposure

Selective exposure was measured by calculating a selection bias in the information selections. The selection bias was calculated by dividing the total number of titles selected that were consistent with that individual's position, based on which political policy or artwork the participant deemed as the better policy/artwork, by the total number of titles selected. This is in contrast to Study 1, where information was designated as consistent or inconsistent based on whether the individual responded above or below the midpoint of the political attitude measures from the beginning of the study. This distinction will become important later. As a reminder, values above 50% indicate selective exposure towards confirmatory information; values below 50% indicate selective exposure towards disconfirmatory information; and values at 50% indicate unbiased information seeking.

Political Knowledge

Political knowledge was measured via two measures. The first was the measure of reported exposure to political news ranging from "Never" (1) to "Daily" (7) used in Study 1. The second measure had participants answer a number of multiple-choice political questions with factually correct responses (e.g., Who is the current Speaker of the House?). See Appendix C for a full listing of the questions for this second measure.

To test for a potential interaction between flag condition and political knowledge, the two political knowledge measures were mean-centered and interaction variables between flag condition and mean-centered political knowledge were created.

Results

Awareness Check

Of the participants in the flags condition, 91 (37.6%) correctly identified that there flags on the screen, 60 (24.8%) incorrectly indicated there were no flags on the screen, and 91 (37.6%) indicated that they couldn't remember whether there were flags or not. Of the participants in the control condition, 133 (53.8%) correctly identified that there were no flags on the screen, four (1.6%) incorrectly indicated there were no flags on the screen, and 110 (44.5%) indicated that they couldn't remember whether there were flags or not. One participant did not provide a response.

Flag Association

64.7% of the sample reported that they associated the American flag more with the Republican party, 8.2% with the Democratic party, and 27.1% associated the flag equally with both parties.

Selective Exposure

Overall, participants engaged in significant levels of selective exposure (M = 78.7%, SD = 24.4), $t(489) = 26.0$, $p < .001$. There was no main effect of artwork type on selective exposure, $F(2,480) = 0.12$, $p = .89$, and artwork type did not interact with flag condition, $F(2, 480) = 0.92$, $p = .41$. However, there was a significant main effect of political issue on selective exposure, $F(2,492) = 5.98$, $p = .003$. Specifically, selective exposure for abortion (M = 78.7%, SD = 33.3) and same sex marital benefits (M = 80.5%, SD = 34.3) were both significantly larger than selective exposure for social security (M = 72.0%, SD = 36.4), ps < .01. However, political issue did not significantly

interact with flag condition, $F(2, 492) = 0.44$), $p = .39$. Consequently, all subsequent analyses are conducted on the average selective exposure value of the three information buffets. Flag exposure did not lead to significant changes in selective exposure for information regarding the artworks, $t(240) = 0.64$. $p = .52$, or the political issues, $t(246) = 1.39$, $p = .17$. See Table D7 for a list of means.

While there was no significant effect of flag exposure on political selective exposure using the dichotomous policy judgments, exploratory analyses revealed that when selective exposure for the political issues was calculated using the continuous political attitude measures that were collected at the beginning of the study, as in Study 1 (see *Measures* in Study 1), there was a significant effect of flag exposure on selective exposure. Participants in the flags condition ($M = 82.5\%$, $SD = 23.6$) engaged in significantly more selective exposure than participants in the control condition ($M = 75.8\%$, $SD = 27.3$), $t(243) = 2.03$, $p = .04$ (see Table D8 for means of individual issues). One possible explanation for these results is that the dichotomous policy judgments included individuals who were actually undecided or ambivalent about the political issue (i.e., individuals who would have responded at the midpoint on the continuous attitude measure). Consequently, forcing these individuals to choose a side of a political issue might introduce extra noise in the selective exposure measure when using the dichotomous choice. If this is the case than we would expect to see an interaction between flag exposure and attitude extremity on a policy, such that the effects of flag exposure are strongest among individuals with strong attitudes about a given policy and weakest or non-existent among individuals who indicate being undecided or ambivalent regarding a given policy. Unfortunately, there was no significant interaction between flag exposure and attitude extremity for abortion, $F(3,240) = 1.98$, $p = .12$; same-sex marriage benefits, $F(3, 240) = 0.95$, $p = .42$; or privatizing social security, $F(3, 240) = 0.44$, $p = .73$. As a result, it is unlikely that the discrepancy in selective exposure results when

using the dichotomous policy judgments and continuous policy attitude measures is the result of increased noise via the inclusion of undecided or ambivalent participants.

Unfortunately, parallel analyses cannot be conducted with the artwork selective exposure since continuous ratings of the artworks were not collected. However, towards the end of the study, participants completed five questions from the Art Reception Scale for the two paintings. Of particular relevance is a measure asking participants to indicate how beautiful they found each painting on a 5-point scale. An exploratory analyses revealed that when selective exposure for the paintings is calculated based on which painting the participant thought was more beautiful (by comparing the two beauty scores), there is still a non-significant difference in selective exposure between the flag conditions, $t(176) = 1.14$, $p = .26$, but the difference in selective exposure goes from a 1.97% difference between conditions (using the dichotomous measures) to a 5.63% difference.

Political Attitudes and Extremity

There was no significant main effect or interaction of information type (political or artistic) on political attitudes, ps > .32, or for any of the extremity measure, ps > .28, so subsequent analyses will collapse across these two conditions. Unlike Study 1, liberals were more extreme than conservatives on all three measures of extremity, ps < .001. However, ideology did not interact with either the flag or information-type conditions, ps > .35, so subsequent analyses will be collapsed across ideology.

Unsurprisingly, conservatives reported more conservative stances on political issues ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.88$) than liberals ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.89$), $t(488) = 19.32$, $p < .001$. Exposure to the American flag failed to produce any differences in political attitudes or extremity of party affiliation, political ideology, or political attitudes, ps > .39 (see Table D7).

Political Knowledge

There were no significant differences in subjective, $t(488) = 1.22$, $p = .23$, or objective, $t(488) = -1.52$, $p = .13$, political knowledge between participants in the flags and control conditions. Separate regression analyses were run with flag condition, information condition, mean-centered (subjective or objective) political knowledge, and two-way and three-way interaction terms. These analyses revealed that there were no significant two-way or three-way interactions between political knowledge, flag exposure, and information-type, ps > .26.

Effects of Awareness and Flag Affiliation

Awareness of the condition the participant was in did not significantly interact with flag condition or information condition for selective exposure, ps > .41. Unlike the previous two studies, examining the participants who were aware of which condition they were in versus those who were not aware failed to produce different results. Selective exposure was not significantly different between the flags and control conditions for participants who were unaware or aware in Study 3, $p = .16$ and .71, respectively. These results did not improve if only looking at participants in the political information condition.

Affiliation of the American flag with the Republican Party did not significantly interact with flag condition or information condition for selective exposure, ps > .46. Examining the participants who affiliated the American flag with the Republican Party versus those who did not failed to produce different results. Selective exposure was not significantly different between the flags and control conditions for participants who associated the American flag with the Republican Party, $p = .14$, and participants who did not associate the American flag with the Republican Party, $p = .54$. These results did not improve if only looking at participants in the political information condition.

Discussion

The results of Study 3 are less straightforward than the previous two studies. Based on the dichotomous judgments, exposure to the American flag did not increase selective exposure for either political or non-political information. However, when selective exposure was calculated using the continuous political attitude measures, as was done in Study 1, participants in the flag condition engaged in significantly more selective exposure than participants in the control condition. Unfortunately, a similar calculation of selective exposure was not possible for the artwork information seeking. It is worth noting that flag exposure once again failed to produce increased political extremity, which is predicted by the social identity account, and there was another failure to replicate the impact of flag exposure on political attitudes (Carter et al., 2011a).

CHAPTER 4
IS IT SIMPLY POLITICS?

Studies 1 and 2 provide suggestive, but not definitive, evidence for the stereotype priming account. Unfortunately, the results of Study 3 are complicated and provide little useful information to test between the three accounts. One of the complications of Study 3 was the failure to replicate the finding from Study 1 that flag exposure increases selective exposure for political information when using a dichotomous measure of political attitudes, but a successful replication of the Study 1 results using the continuous measure of political attitudes.

Study 4 was designed with two purposes in mind. First, Study 4 utilizes a different political cue than the previous studies. While Studies 1-3 included exposure to the American flag, Study 4 utilized news sources as a political cue. The rise of cable news channels and internet news sources has led to the emergence of news sources that report news from a particular side of the political spectrum. Consequently, exposure to the logo of a conservative news source, even if the exposure to the news source is in a non-political context, could prime conservative stereotypes and increased NFCC.

The second purpose of Study 4 was to utilize a liberal prime—the logo of a liberal news source—to provide a direct test between the stereotype priming and social identity accounts. If the social identity account is correct, then individuals who are exposed to a liberal cue should engage in similar levels of selective exposure as individuals exposed to a conservative cue, since both cues should make one's political identity salient. Alternatively, the stereotype priming account predicts that individuals exposed to a liberal cue should demonstrate similar or decreased selective exposure relative to individuals exposed to a moderate (control) cue, since the liberal stereotype does not include high NFCC (Scherer et al., 2014). Due to the lack of evidence for the active self-concept account in previous studies, the hypothesis that the effect of the political cues on

information seeking may be moderated by political affiliation will be tested but is not considered a likely account at this point.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants (N = 159) were University of Iowa students from introductory psychology courses. The sample was 59.6% female and had a mean age of 19.3 (*SD* = 1.8). The sample was predominantly White (72.4%). Individuals who identified as Asians (14.7%) or Hispanic (7.1%) made up a majority of the rest of the sample. The majority of the sample identified more with the Democratic Party (37.1%; 3.2% strongly identified with the Democratic Party) or as liberals (44.2%, 3.2% strongly identified as liberal). A minority of the sample identified more with the Republican Party (26.9%; 5.1% strongly identified with the Republican Party) or as conservatives (23.1%; 2.6% strongly identified as conservatives). The remainder of the participants did not strongly identify with either political party (35.9%) or ideology (32.7%). Study 4 utilized a 3 (news source: CNN, Fox News, MSNBC) x 3 (issue order: abortion first, first same sex marriage first, or social security) x 3 (political issue: abortion, same sex marriage, and social security) mixed-subjects design with the last factor being a within-subjects factor.

Materials and Procedures

Upon entry into the lab participants were told that they would be completing a number of studies that were combined for the sake of efficiency. Participants were told that the first study was an examination of the effectiveness of online news articles. Participants were then presented with an article about a non-political topic: self-healing cellphone batteries. Critically, the perceived source of the news article was manipulated by having the top of the article contain the CNN (control), Fox News (conservative prime), or MSNBC (liberal prime) website header (see Figure E4 for CNN article). These

news sources were selected based on the perceived ideological affiliation of the news sources (see *Measures*). After reading the article, participants completed a few filler questions about the article regarding how informative, interesting, and easy to read the article was.

After completion of the article task, participants were told they would be completing a second study on political attitudes. Participants completed the political attitudes measure and selective exposure task used in Study 1. After completing materials from two unrelated studies, participants concluded the study by providing demographic information; completing measures of objective political knowledge and political information consumption; providing perceptions of CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC; and answering a few suspicion check questions, which included a measure of whether the participant remembered the source of the news article at the beginning of the study.

Measures

Perceptions of News Sources

Participants completed items assessing the perceived credibility, political ideology, and bias of CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC, as well as the participant's familiarity, liking, and exposure to these news sources. Participants completed all questions for a given news source before moving on to the next news source. The presentation order of the news sources was randomized.

Credibility of the news source was measured by having participants indicate how credible they thought the news source was on a scale ranging from "Completely noncredible" (1) to "Completely credible" (7). Ideology of the news source was measured on a 7-point scale ranging from "Extremely liberal" (-3) to "Extremely conservative" (3). Bias of the news source was measured by having participants indicate the extent to which they thought the news source was biased by their political ideology on a 7-point scale ranging from "Completely unbiased" (-3) to "Completely biased" (3). Familiarity with

the news source was measured by having participants indicate their familiarity with the news source on a scale ranging from "I've never heard of this news source" (1) to "Extremely familiar" (7). Liking of the news source was measured by having participants indicate to what extent they like or dislike the news source on a scale with the labels Dislike Extremely (-3), Dislike Very Much (-2), Dislike Slightly (-1), Neither Like nor Dislike (0), Like Slightly (1), Like Very Much (2), and Like Extremely (3). Exposure to the news source was measured by having participants indicate the number of hours a week they watch, read, or listen to the news source. See Table D9 for the means of each of these measures.

The three news sources were selected based on results from a pilot study (N = 50) that provided evidence that individuals perceive CNN as neither liberal nor conservative (M = -0.04, SD = 1.32), $t(49) = -0.21$, $p = .83$; Fox News as a conservative news source (M = 1.00, SD = 1.47), $t(49) = 4.81$, $p < .001$; and MSNBC as a liberal news source (M = -0.42, SD = 1.14), $t(49) = -2.60$, $p = .01$.

Political Extremity

Unlike Studies 1-3, Study 4 utilized a more commonly used measure of political ideology and political party affiliation. Political ideology was measured on a 7-point scale ranging from "Extremely liberal" (-3) to "Extremely conservative" (3). Political party affiliation was measured on a 7-point scale ranging from "Strongly Democratic" (-3) to "Strongly Republican" (3). Extremity on both of these measures was measured by taking the absolute values of their responses on these two scales. Consequently extremity values ranged from 0-3, with higher values indicating a stronger affiliation with their political ideology or party.

Results

Awareness Check

Of the participants in the CNN condition, 44 (84.6%) correctly identified that CNN was the source of the news article, one (1.9%) incorrectly indicated that Fox News or MSNBC was the source of the news article, and seven (13.5%) indicated that they couldn't remember the source of the news article.

Of the participants in the Fox News condition, 18 (34.0%) correctly identified that Fox News was the source of the news article, 16 (30.2%) incorrectly indicated that CNN or MSNBC was the source of the news article, and 19 (35.8%) indicated that they couldn't remember the source of the news article.

Of the participants in the MSNBC condition, 26 (51.0%) correctly identified that MSNBC was the source of the news article, six (11.7%) incorrectly indicated that Fox News or CNN was the source of the news article, and 19 (37.3%) indicated that they couldn't remember the source of the news article.

Perceptions of News Sources

Consistent with the results of the pilot data, participants perceived CNN as neither liberal nor conservative (M = -0.01, SD = 1.28), $t(154) = -0.06$, $p = .95$; Fox News as a conservative news source (M = 1.05, SD = 1.60), $t(155) = 8.20$, $p < .001$; and MSNBC as a liberal news source (M = -0.35, SD = 1.21), $t(154) = -3.65$, $p < .001$. There was a significant group difference in familiarity with the news source that were used as the cues with participants indicating less familiarity with MSNBC (M = 5.29, SD = 1.47) than CNN (M = 5.65, SD = 1.41) or Fox News (M = 5.61, SD = 1.44), $F(2, 308) = 7.04$, $p = .001$.

Selective Exposure

Overall, participants engaged in significant levels of selective exposure (M = 62.8%, SD = 22.7), $t(155) = 7.05$, $p < .001$. There was a significant main effect of political issue on selective exposure, $F(2,294) = 17.88$, $p < .001$. Specifically, selective exposure for abortion and same sex marital benefits were both significantly larger than selective exposure for privatized social security, ps < .001 (see Table D10). The reason for the extremely low selective exposure for privatized social security was revealed by a significant interaction between political issue and political issue presentation order interaction, $F(4,294) = 5.39$, $p < .001$. Specifically, selective exposure was always lowest for a given issue when it was presented first (see Table D11), but this effect was most pronounced in the selective exposure for privatized social security, which dropped down to 33.6% when presented first. This overall finding, that selective exposure was significantly lower for the first political issue compared to the second and third issues was validated in a repeated-measures ANOVA in which a selective exposure value was calculated for the first, second, and third political issue (see Table D12 for means) $F(4,294) = 10.44$, $p < .001$. Specifically, selective exposure was significantly lower for the first political issue compared to the selective exposure for the second and third political issues, ps < .001. There was no significant difference between the selective exposure for the second and third political issues, $p = .81$. News source condition did not produce any significant two-way or three-way interactions with issue order or political issue, ps > .37. Due to the abnormal information seeking behavior for the first political issue, an "abridged" selective exposure value was calculated only using the selective exposure for the second and third political issues.

For both the overall or abridged selective exposure measures, there were marginally significant group differences in selective exposure based on news source condition, ps < .13 (see Table D10). These marginal group differences were the result of the overall and abridged selective exposure being lowest in the Fox News condition.

Utilizing a planned-contrast comparing the selective exposure in the Fox News condition to the CNN and MSNBC conditions revealed significantly less selective exposure in the Fox News condition compared to the CNN and MSNBC conditions for both overall selective exposure, $t(153) = -2.17$, $p = .03$, and abridged selective exposure, $t(153) = -2.04$, $p = .04$. There was no main effect or interaction between news source and political ideology for overall selective exposure, ps >.67, or abridged selective exposure, ps > .26.

Political Attitudes and Extremity

Conservatives reported more conservative stances on political issues ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.68$) than liberals ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.71$), $t(103) = 7.90$, $p < .001$. Liberals had more extreme political attitudes than conservatives, $t(103) = 2.04$ $p = .04$, but did not exhibit more extremity in their political ideology, $t(103) = 1.53$, $p = .13$, or political party affiliation, $t(103) = 0.29$, $p = .77$. Ideology did not interact with news source, ps > .36, so subsequent analyses will be collapsed across ideology. Exposure to the different news sources produced no significant shifts in political attitudes, $F(2,153) = 0.86$, $p = .42$, or extremity of political attitudes, $F(2,153) = 0.29$, $p = .75$ or ideology, $F(2,153) = 0.21$, $p = .82$, but did result in a marginal difference in party affiliation extremity, $F(2,153) = 2.42$, $p = .09$. However, post-hoc comparisons revealed that participants identified more strongly with their political party in the MSNBC condition compared to the CNN condition, $p = .03$, while the Fox News condition did not significantly differ from the other two conditions, ps > .21 (see Table D10).

Effects of Awareness

Awareness of the condition the participant was in did not significantly interact with news source condition for overall selective exposure, $F(2, 150) = 0.93$, $p = .40$, or abridged selective exposure, $F(2, 150) = 0.40$, $p = .67$. Results did not improve when analyzing participants who were aware of which condition they were in and those who were not aware.

Close-mindedness, Selective Exposure, and Flag Condition

NFCC scores were uncorrelated with selective exposure when looking at the full sample, $r(155) = -.03$, $p = .05$. The results did not improve when examining the correlations between NFCC and selective exposure for individuals in the CNN, $r(51) = .07$, $p = .62$, Fox News, $r(52) = -.07$, $p = .64$, or MSNBC, $r(50) = -.06$, $p = .67$, conditions separately.

Discussion

The primary purpose of Study 4 was to test the impact of a liberal cue on selective exposure to provide a direct test between the social identity and stereotype priming accounts. News source logos were used due to the relatively transparent ideological leanings of Fox News (conservative) and MSNBC (liberal). Contrary to Studies 1 and 3, where exposure to a conservative cue increased selective exposure, exposure to a (non-political) Fox News article decreased selective exposure relative to when the article was thought to come from a moderate (CNN) or liberal (MSNBC) news source, findings which conflict with all three accounts.

One possible explanation for the lower selective exposure in the Fox News condition is that participants had an overall negative view of Fox News, viewing it as less credible and more biased than the other two news sources, and after reading a well-written, non-political news article purportedly from Fox News, participants perceived Fox News as more credible or less biased, perhaps priming an objective mindset which influenced information seeking. In support of this, participants did perceive Fox News as less credible, more biased, and less likeable than the other two news sources, ps $< .04$. However, participants in the Fox News condition did not perceive Fox News as any more credible, any less biased, or more likeable compared to participants in the other two conditions, ps $> .63$.

Another possibility is that the perceived bias of Fox News may have led participants to adopt a more "objective" mindset to avoid the appearance of being biased themselves, resulting in decreased selective exposure in the Fox News condition. If this is true than we would expect to see a negative correlation between the perceived bias of Fox News and selective exposure among participants in the Fox News condition. Contrary to this prediction, perception of Fox News bias was uncorrelated with selective exposure among participants in the Fox News condition, $r(53) = -.03$, $p = .86$.

A third possibility is that participants view Fox News as an extreme exemplar, leading to contrast effects instead of assimilation. Previous research on priming (e.g., Dijksterhuis, Spears, Postmes, Stapel, Koomen, van Knippenberg, & Scheepers, 1998) and social comparison (e.g., Mussweiler, Rüter, & Epstude, 2004) has revealed that individuals will assimilate towards moderate comparison targets, but will contrast from extreme targets. As noted above, Fox News was perceived as more extreme compared to the other news sources, opening up the possibility that Fox News served as an extreme conservative exemplar. While the results of Study 4 do not support any of the three accounts as currently formulated, the stereotype priming account could be modified to predict assimilation to political stereotypes after exposure to subtle or moderate political cues and contrast after exposure to extreme political cues, results consistent with other priming research. When viewed through the lens of this updated version of the stereotype priming account, the results of the current study could be interpreted as being supportive of the stereotype priming account. The social identity account cannot be modified to accommodate the results of the current finding and while the active self-concept account could theoretically be modified in a way that parallels the stereotype priming account, the failure to find moderation of the effect of news source on ideology fails to support a modified version of the active self-concept account.

Another curious finding from Study 4 was that selective exposure was unusually low for the first political issue that was presented relative to the second and third political

issues. One possible explanation for this result is that while the article evaluation task was meant to only serve as a political cue, the evaluation aspect of the task may have actually served as an "objectivity" prime, which influenced information seeking for the first political issue. This is an issue I will return to in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Four experiments were conducted to test whether exposure to conservative cues increases NFCC, primarily measured via engagement in selective exposure. These studies were also designed to test between the predictions of three accounts regarding the impact of conservative cues on information seeking. The social identity account posited that conservative cues might increase selective exposure (for political information) by making one's political identity salient. The stereotype priming account posited that conservative cues might increase selective exposure by priming the stereotype that conservatives are high in NFCC, which the individual then assimilates towards. The active self-concept account makes the same prediction as the stereotype priming account, but only for conservatives, with liberals either disregarding or contrasting away from the conservative stereotype. The interpretation of the results across the studies is far from clear-cut, so I'll provide a summary of the results from each study before moving into a broader discussion of the impact of political cues on information seeking and the support for the different accounts.

In Study 1, participants who were exposed to the American flag engaged in significantly more selective exposure than participants who had no flag exposure. It is worth noting that the impact of flag exposure on information seeking was not moderated by political affiliation (re: liberal or conservative). There was also no evidence that exposure to the American flag resulted in increased affiliation with one's political in-group. One interesting finding from Experiment 1 was that exposure to the American flag increased selective exposure among individuals who were unaware of whether flags were presented or not, but failed to significantly increase selective exposure among individuals who were aware of which condition they were in.

In Study 2, exposure to the American flag resulted in decreased response times to NFCC and nationalism items, but only among individuals who were unaware of which

condition they were in. Political ideology did not moderate the impact of flag exposure on reaction times. However, participants who were in the flags condition (but unaware of it) also responded more quickly to items related to self-concept clarity, one of the "control" traits used in the study. Interestingly, conservatives in the study actually reported being higher in self-concept clarity than liberals in the study, which opens the door to the possibility that higher self-concept clarity might be part of lay peoples' political stereotypes of conservatives.

The results of Study 3 were exceedingly problematic to interpret. Flag exposure did not result in any significant changes in selective exposure for non-political information. However, there was also a failure to replicate the results from Study 1 using dichotomous measures of political policy preferences. Specifically, flag exposure in Study 3 did not lead to increased selective exposure for political information. These results did not improve when including political knowledge, a known moderator of flag effects (e.g., Carter et al., 2011b), in the analyses. The results were significantly different though when calculating selective exposure for political information using the continuous political attitude measures, the selective exposure calculation method used in Study 1. When selective exposure was calculated using the continuous political attitude measures, participants who were exposed to the American flag did engage in increased selective exposure. Unfortunately, it was impossible to calculate selective exposure for the non-political information using continuous measures, but a makeshift measure of selective exposure for the painting artworks provided some non-significant, but suggestive, evidence that flag exposure may increase selective exposure for non-political information.

Study 4 was primarily designed to provide a direct test between the social identity and stereotype priming accounts by incorporating a liberal cue in addition to a conservative cue. Unlike Studies 1 and 3, where the conservative cue resulted in increased selective exposure, exposure to the conservative cue in Study 4 (Fox News)

results in *reduced* selective exposure relative to the neutral (CNN) and liberal (MSNBC) cues.

Given the complexity of the results from the current studies, I will spend the remainder of this paper exploring what these results might mean, both in terms of the specific research questions discussed in the Introduction as well as the broader implications of the findings. I will start by discussing whether conservative cues increase confirmatory information seeking, followed by a discussion of which of the three accounts presented in the Introduction was most supported before returning to the issue of political primes. I will then conclude with a discussion of the broader theoretical and practical implications of the current studies.

Political Cues and Information Seeking

The purpose of this paper was to explore whether political cues might influence social-cognitive motives, specifically the epistemic motive of NFCC. The primary method of assessing the impact of political ideology on NFCC was through selective exposure to confirming information. If conservative cues increased selective exposure while liberal cues decreased, or produced no change in, selective exposure, this would have provided clear initial support for the idea that political ideology can influence social-cognitive motives in a way that is consistent with, but not necessarily predicted by, the MSC model of political conservatism (Jost et al., 2003a).

Based on the results of the current studies, what is the response to the question "Do political cues influence information seeking?" The answer is a resounding "Maybe?" There was definitely evidence that selective exposure increased following exposure to the American flag, a conservative cue. In both Studies 1 and 3, selective exposure, when calculated using the continuous political attitude measures collected at the beginning of the studies, was significantly larger following exposure to the American flag. There was even some (non-significant) suggestive evidence that exposure to the American flag may

increase selective exposure for non-political information when using a continuous measure of preference, but the design of Study 3 didn't allow a clean test of the impact of the American Flag on selective exposure for non-political information using continuous measures of preference.

The above results provide evidence that exposure to conservative cues increases selective exposure. Unfortunately, these results can be contrasted to the instances where conservative cues resulted in no change or decreases in selective exposure. When selective exposure was calculated based on dichotomous judgments in Study 3, flag exposure resulted in no significant changes in selective exposure. Additionally, when the political cue was changed to a conservative news source (Fox News), this conservative cue resulted in decreased selective exposure compared to the when participants were exposed to a neutral (CNN) or liberal (MSNBC) news sources.

The current results highlight some of the tricky issues in utilizing primes in selective exposure research. For example, there was the unexpected finding in Study 4 that selective exposure was significantly lower for the first political issue compared to the second and third political issues. One possible reason for this result, briefly discussed at the end of Study 4, is that while the task associated with the political cue was meant to be innocuous and only prime political stereotypes, the task of having participants evaluate a (non-political) news article may have primed a deliberative mindset. While the impact of a deliberative mindset on selective exposure and a preference for consistency is mixed (see Fischer, Fischer, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2010; Nordgren & Dijsterhuis, 2009), it is fairly easy to imagine how evaluating a news article may have produced a deliberative mindset leading participants to approach the initial information buffet with more of a focus on accuracy, prompting an even-handed or disconfirmatory search for the first political issue and perhaps freeing individuals up to indulge in their usual consistency-seeking behavior for subsequent information buffets (similar to licensing effects; see

Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010) to explain the return to selective exposure for the second and third political issues.

In addition to particular aspects of a priming task that might undermine the intended effects of the prime on selective exposure, finding a political prime that produces a systematic effect on selective exposure has been exceedingly difficult. In addition to the American flag and news source cues, I have explored the impact of other pre-existing primes for concepts that are linked to politics, such as meritocracy (Bryan et al., 2009; McCoy & Major, 2007) and religiosity/God (Berger et al., 2008; LaBouff et al., 2012; Rutchick, 2010; see Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007, for the prime). While these primes often produced results that indicated a directional increase in selective exposure, they either failed to produce consistent significant differences in selective exposure or produced inconsistent results (Scherer, 2013a, 2013b). The results of these other primes, in addition to the primes used in the current studies, highlight the need to develop political primes that consistently produce systematic results on selective exposure before a better test of the impact of political ideology on social-cognitive motives, or at least selective exposure, can be conducted. This is an issue I will return to later.

While examining the impact of political cues on selective exposure would have been a powerful demonstration of the impact of political ideology on social-cognitive motives, in hindsight, it may not have been the best place to start. When the impact of contextual factors on selective exposure are examined, they are typically powerful manipulations, such as framing effects (Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Kastenmüller, 2008; Kastenmüller, Fischer, Jonas, Greitemeyer, Frey, Koppl, & Aydin, 2010), and participants select information regarding hypothetical scenarios (e.g., Fischer et al., 2008) or make judgments and decisions about novel stimuli (e.g., Scherer et al., 2013) for which participants are unlikely to have strong pre-existing preferences. The studies that have examined the impact of contextual factors on selective exposure for political issues have utilized highly affect-laden manipulations, such as feelings of threat (Fischer et al.,

2011; Lavine, Lodge, & Freitas, 2005). Consequently, given the attitude strength of political attitudes, relative to the other types of judgments and attitudes that are commonly used in selective exposure research, it might just be more difficult to push around selective exposure for political information using the types of cues that would be necessary to establish the impact of political ideology on social-cognitive motives.

An additional complication of using selective exposure as a measure of the expression of NFCC was the failure to consistently find an overall correlation between NFCC and selective exposure. Despite previous research demonstrating a correlation between trait NFCC and selective exposure (Hart et al., 2009, 2012), the only evidence of the relationship between these two factors in the current studies occurred in the flags condition of Study 1. A similar relationship existed between NFCC and overall response times in Study 2, where NFCC was associated with faster response times (an expression of NFCC) primarily for individuals in the flags condition. Consequently, one can infer that exposure to the American flag increased the relationship between the reporting of NFCC and the expression of NFCC, but the overall failure to replicate the previously demonstrated relationship between NFCC and selective exposure casts a shadow over attempts to interpret the results of the current studies through the lenses of either the stereotype priming or active self-concept accounts.

Social Identity, Stereotype Priming, or Active Self-Concepts?

As the summary of the results highlight, the results of the current studies were far from definitive in supporting one account over the others. That being said, the overall results of the current studies seem more consistent with the stereotype priming account as opposed to the social identity and active self-concept accounts. There are a number of reasons that I make this assertion.

First, when conservative cues influenced selective exposure, the effects were not moderated by political ideology. Recall that both the stereotype priming and social

identity accounts predicted a main effect of conservative cues on selective exposure, while the active self-concept account predicted that only conservatives should exhibit increased selective exposure in response to a conservative cue. Consequently, the lack of moderation by ideology across the studies appears to knock the active self-concept account out of the explanatory running.

Second, there was no systematic evidence that exposure to conservative (or liberal) cues resulted in increased identification with one's political party or ideology. Studies 1, 2 and 4 all contained multiple measures of identification with one's political in-group, including political attitudes and strength of one's affiliation with their political party and ideology. Across each of these studies, exposure to conservative and liberal cues failed to result in any systematic increases in political attitudes, party affiliation, or ideological affiliation strength. While the extremity measures were meant to provide one means of testing between the social identity and stereotype priming accounts, the design of Study 4, with the inclusion of both a conservative and liberal cue, was meant to provide the strongest test between the two accounts, with the social identity account predicting increased selective exposure for both the conservative and liberal cue conditions and the stereotype priming account predicting increased selective exposure for the conservative cue group only. Unfortunately, the use of the news source cues resulted in a decrease in selective exposure for the conservative cue group, results that are inconsistent with all three accounts.

Given the paucity of liberal primes and the difficulty of establishing liberal primes to complement existing conservative primes such as meritocracy (S. McCoy, *personal communication*, August 2, 2012), alternative methods of directly testing between the social identity and stereotype priming accounts might need to be explored in future research. One possibility would be to utilize an affective priming task that measures the implicit associations between the self and conservatism and liberalism (re: associative self-anchoring; Gawronski, Bodenhausen, & Becker, 2007). The stereotype priming

account would predict that exposure to a conservative cue should increase the implicit association between the self and conservatism, while the social identity account would predict that exposure to a conservative cue would increase the implicit association between the self and one's initial ideological leaning.

The final piece of evidence that seems more supportive of the stereotype priming account are the results of Study 2. Among the subset of participants who were not aware of which condition they were in, flag exposure resulted in faster response times for nationalism and NFCC items, results predicted by the stereotype priming account, but not the social identity account. Notably these results were not moderated by political ideology, which would have been predicted by the active self-concept account. One complication to this interpretation of the results is that flag exposure also resulted in faster response times for self-concept clarity, which was meant to be one of the "control" traits. While this seems problematic at first glance, there were actual group differences in self-concept clarity between conservatives and liberals in the sample, opening up the possibility that high self-concept clarity might be part of individuals' political stereotypes of conservatives that were activated by the American flag exposure. Self-concept clarity was chosen as a "control" trait due to its use in this capacity in other studies testing the active self-concept account of priming (e.g., DeMarree, Petty, & Strunk, 2010). In hindsight, the self-concept clarity measure could be construed as a measure of the cognitive rigidity of one's view of the self. Such items as "In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am" and "My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another" (reverse-coded) highlight that self-concept clarity essentially measures NFCC in regards to one's views of their self-concept. Consequently, self-concept clarity may be another interesting, yet unexamined, group difference in social-cognitive motives between conservatives and liberals that could be explored in future research. It is also worth noting that participants in the flags condition responded faster to all items overall, results consistent with the increased expression of NFCC.

Considered all together, the above results, while messy, provide the first suggestive evidence that political ideology might shape social-cognitive motives by activating political stereotypes which individuals assimilate towards. Future research should attempt to procure results that are cleaner than those found in the current set of studies and branch out to explore the impact of political cues on the other social-cognitive motives.

The Capriciousness of Political Primes

One of the more surprising findings was the consistent failure to replicate the effects of American flag exposure on political attitudes. The reason the American flag was chosen to serve as the primary conservative cue in the current studies was due to the numerous studies demonstrating the impact of exposure to the American flag on conservative attitudes and values (e.g., Carter et al., 2011a, 2011b; Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008) relative to other types of conservative primes. Barring one or two exceptions, which were discussed in Study 1, the political attitude items were identical to those used in a previous set of studies (Carter et al., 2011a). Not only did the flag exposure not have a main effect on political attitudes, but flag exposure was not moderated by other effects. For example, previous research has provided evidence that political news exposure and political knowledge moderate the impact of flag exposure on the expression of political attitudes (Carter et al., 2011b; Ferguson & Hassin, 2007). Three of the four studies included measures of political news exposure and/or political knowledge, but failed to produce any evidence that these factors moderated the impact of flag exposure. Another possibility for the failure to find an effect of flag exposure on political attitudes may be differences in samples, specifically in regards to the distribution of political affiliations. One specific concern might be that the samples of the current studies were skewed liberal, which might have resulted in different effects of flag exposure on political attitudes. However, this is unlikely to account for the differences in

results between the current studies and previous studies, since samples from other studies utilizing American flag exposure are usually skewed liberal as well (e.g., Carter et al., 2011b). Additionally, I have repeatedly noted that political ideology failed to moderate any of the relationships between flag exposure and any of the key dependent variables (re: selective exposure and political attitudes), suggesting that the liberal-skew of the samples in the current studies may not be particularly problematic.

The failure to replicate the impact of exposure to the American flag on political attitudes highlights the capricious nature of political primes in particular and a problem of social priming research in general. The issue of replicability in social psychology has been a contentious issue of debate over the last few years (Yong, 2013; also see John, Loewenstein, & Prelec, 2012; Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011; and Simonsohn, Nelson, & Simmons, *in press*, for discussions about why replicability might be such an issue for social psychologists). Replicability has become such a hot-button issue that psychologist and Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman sent an open letter to a number of prominent social priming researchers, strongly suggesting the need to implement a protocol for establishing replication attempts of social priming effects with the entire area of social priming being at stake if actions are not taken (Kahneman, 2012). To my knowledge there has not been evidence that social priming researchers have begun implementing Kahneman's suggestions, but the Many Labs Replication Project (https://osf.io/wx7ck/) recently conducted replication attempts for 13 effects from social psychological and judgment and decision-making research utilizing 36 samples and over 6000 participants from labs across the world. Of the 13 effects tested, ten of the effects replicated, one of the effects was inconclusive, and two of the effects failed to replicate, with effects sizes at or near zero. Of note is that the two effects that failed to replicate were social priming effects. Even more important for the current set of studies is that one of the effects that failed to replicate was the impact of the American flag on conservatism

(re: Carter et al., 2011a). Consequently, the results of the current studies are consistent with other attempts to replicate the effect of flag exposure on political attitudes.

Given the current studies failure to replicate the impact of American flag exposure on conservative attitudes, it is then somewhat surprising to find an impact of flag exposure on information seeking across two of the current studies. That being said, it is worth noting the fickle nature of the impact of flag exposure on information seeking. There was no significant effect of flag exposure on selective exposure in Study 3 when selective exposure was calculated using a dichotomous measure of policy preferences. This is in contrast the significant increase in selective exposure following flag exposure when selective exposure was calculated using a continuous measure of policy preferences in Studies 1 and 3.

Another demonstration of the fickle nature of the flag prime is that in some of the studies the effects were moderated by the participant's awareness of which condition they were in (Studies 1-2), while in another study there was simply a main effect of flag exposure (Study 3). On the one hand, the finding that awareness might moderate the impact of flag exposure on selective exposure and the accessibility of NFCC is not that surprising, given that other research has demonstrated that individuals often attempt to correct for the influence of a prime when they are aware of the possible biasing effects of the prime (e.g., Lombardi, Higgins, & Bargh, 1987; Martin, Seta, & Crelia, 1990; Wegener & Petty, 1995). However, very few, if any, participants guessed the hypothesized contingency between exposure to the American flag and information seeking. For example, in Study 1 most participants thought that exposure to the American flag would have no effect on any responses throughout the study or, if it did have an effect, it would simply make individuals more patriotic without elaborating on how increased patriotism might influence responding in the study. Four participants (out of 159) said that exposure to the American flag might influence a person's existing beliefs, with three participants speculating that American flag exposure might make individuals

more conservative and one participant speculating that the American flag might make individuals more entrenched in their beliefs, the closest anyone got to explicating the key contingency that was tested in the study. In other words, no one mentioned information seeking, suggesting that it is unlikely that bias correction can account for the discrepancy in selective exposure findings between the two awareness groups.

The results of the current studies, as well as other replication attempts of social and political primes, highlight the need for the development of better political primes. Providing the best test of the impact of political ideology on social-cognitive motives will require primes that produce consistent results and are distinguishable from a direct prime of social-cognitive motives, such as threat (e.g., Thórisdóttir and Jost, 2011).

Theoretical Implications

Previous research has demonstrated the impact that changes in social-cognitive motives has on political ideology. Specifically higher needs to reduce uncertainty, manage threats, and experience solidarity are associated with higher endorsements of political conservatism (e.g., Jost et al., 2007; Nail et al., 2009; Wakslak et al., 2011; Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011). Whether intentional or not, the depictions of the relationship between social-cognitive motives and political ideology has been presented a unidirectional model, with social-cognitive motives influencing political ideology. The results of the current studies, while far from definitive, point to the possibility that the relationship between social-cognitive motives and political ideology might be bidirectional. If true, this has broad implications for the way we think about how political ideology is adopted and maintained. Specifically, the individual differences in social-cognitive motives that initially lead an individual to adopt a particular ideology may also be strengthened by symbols and cues related to the ideology they have adopted. As an example take an individual who is high in NFCC. This individual will be more likely to adopt a conservative ideology (Jost et al., 2003a) and be more likely to place conservative

cues, such as the American flag, in their environment (Carney et al., 2008), which then serves as an environmental cue making NFCC more accessible, promoting further belief maintenance.

There is a lot of empirical work that needs to be done at a number of levels before we can pursue these bigger questions regarding the possibly recursive relationship between political ideology and social-cognitive motives. First, conceptual replications need to be conducted to better establish the impact of political ideology on NFCC. While the results of the current study are suggestive, they are far from definitive, so future research should seek to build on the current studies to better bolster the claim that political ideology can influence NFCC. Second, the impact of priming political ideology on other epistemic motives needs to be assessed. As discussed in the Introduction, each of the social-cognitive motives can be measured in a number of ways. For example, need to reduce uncertainty can also be measured based on one's aversion to ambiguity or preference for structure and order. Future research could explore whether exposure to conservative cues increases ambiguity aversion or perceptions of order and structure. Thirdly, the impact of priming political ideology on other social-cognitive motives (re: existential and ideological motives) needs to be tested. For example, does exposure to conservative cues lead to greater loss aversion, an existential motive, or greater system justification, an ideological motive? While the results of Study 1 found no significant differences in system justification after exposure to the American flag, as the current studies highlight, it might be the case that political cues influence social-cognitive motives through more implicit processes, rather than through more deliberative responses on a measure meant to assess stable individual differences. Once research is conducted in each of these areas, political psychology will have a better understanding of the relationship between social-cognitive motives and political ideology.

Additionally, if conservative cues influence social-cognitive motives by priming conservative stereotypes, then this highlights an important, and previously unexplored,

consequence of political stereotypes. As mentioned in the Introduction, surprisingly very little research has investigated political stereotypes (Chambers et al., 2006; Chambers & Melnyk, 2006; Graham et al., 2012; Judd & Park, 1993; Robinson et al., 1995), especially political stereotypes that fall outside of the realm of moral and ideological values (see Scherer et al., 2014, for the exception). If subsequent research provides additional support for the stereotype priming account, then this could lead to a productive research program examining a) additional content of political stereotypes and b) different consequences of activating political stereotypes.

Practical Implications

The current research suggesting that political cues, namely conservative cues, in our environment can shape our social-cognitive motives has practical implications for at least two different, but related, issues: information seeking and political polarization. Just as in the current studies, political cues are often presented in the context of information seeking (news television programs, internet websites, newspapers, etc.) that could influence how individuals seek out political information in way that further entrenches the person in their existing political views. As a result, sources of political information may be inadvertently producing increased confirmatory information seeking through the constant display of different political cues. If subsequent research discovers that conservative cues increase selective exposure for even non-political information, which Study 3 was unclear on, then the practical implications for information seeking become even greater. One can imagine a situation in which a person has the news on while reading reviews for a product he is thinking about buying, briefly glancing up at the screen to see the Republican Party symbol flashed on the screen before returning to reading product reviews. If conservative cues in our environment shape even non-political information seeking, this brief exposure to the Republican Party symbol could cause this person to look at more of the positive reviews for the product he wants at the

expense of reading some of the negative reviews. While this example highlights the potential impact of political cues on information seeking about products, a generalized effect of political cues on information seeking could also have relevance for buying stock, making medical diagnoses, or conducting a criminal investigation.

Second, there are implications for the current polarization that has occurred in the United States. The United States has seen increasing political polarization in recent years (Bishop, 2008; Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013). Since the late-1990s and early-2000s, the United States has seen the emergence of news sources clearly aligned to a particular political ideology, such as Fox News and MSNBC, as well as the near universal use of the internet and social media, which creates the potential for individuals to create virtual enclaves, where they can surround themselves primarily with information and individuals who support their existing viewpoints. Additionally, the display of political symbols, especially the American flag, has risen following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (Skitka, 2005). Given the link between selective exposure and belief maintenance (e.g., Druckman, Fein, & Leeper, 2012), we would expect the results of the current studies to also shed light on factors contributing to increased political polarization. Specifically, in addition to any direct effect that exposure to political cues might have on political polarization, perhaps via increased political identity salience, political cues might also indirectly impact political polarization through changes in selective exposure. That being said, while exposure to the American flag increased selective exposure in Study 1, there was no evidence that flag exposure increased positive evaluations of political in-group members or negative evaluations of political out-group members. If anything, the results seemed to support the idea that exposure to the American flag might actual decrease differences in intergroup evaluations, results that are consistent with some research on exposure to national flags (Butz, 2009; Butz, Plant, & Doerr, 2007; Hassin, Ferguson, Kardosh, Porter, Carter, & Dudareva, 2009; Hassin, Ferguson, Shidlovski, & Gross, 2007), but is inconsistent with other research (Becker,

Enders-Comberg, Wagner, Christ, & Butz, 2012; Ferguson & Hassin, 2007). Future research should focus on determining moderators of political cues on intergroup cooperation versus intergroup hostility.

Conclusions

American flags outside the post office. The Democratic Party symbol being displayed on the television in the waiting room at the doctor's office. Bumper stickers advocating a particular political candidate on the car in front of you in traffic. Political cues are everywhere around us. Drawing on research highlighting the relationship between our social-cognitive motives and the political ideology we adopt, the current research examined whether political cues influence the epistemic motive of need for cognitive closure, primarily measured via selective exposure to confirming information. The results of the current studies, while far from definitive, point to the possibility that political ideology cues can, in fact, influence social-cognitive motives. Returning to the example at the beginning of the paper, in which many Republicans were blindsided by the outcome of the 2012 Presidential Election, the results of the current studies suggest that the Republican Party might want display a few less American flags on the campaign trail in 2016…

APPENDIX A: POLITICAL ATTITUDE ITEMS

For each statement below, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree according to how you feel right now.

It is okay to give up some civil liberties in order to advance the war on terror.
Laws designed to protect the environment pose too high a cost on businesses that contribute to the economy.
A woman should have the right to choose what to do with her body, even if that means getting an abortion.
The United States' policy towards immigration is far too lenient. We need to make sure that Americans are able to find jobs before letting anyone else in the country.
The United States should invade Iran in order to prevent them from gaining nuclear weapons.
Affirmative action gives those groups with a history of oppression a chance to get ahead.
It is important for our legal system to use the death penalty as punishment for heinous crimes.
We should begin offshore oil drilling immediately.
Homosexuals should have the same right to marriage as anyone else.
Stem Cell research has important implications for medical advances, and should be pursued at all costs.
Teaching kids about sex in schools will only encourage them to have sex sooner.
It is okay for the United States to use more extreme interrogation techniques to extract information from suspected terrorists.
Universal health care is a right that should be provided to each U.S. citizen.
Social security should be privatized.
Labor unions are too powerful and should have some of their powers limited.
Gun control laws are not nearly strict enough.

APPENDIX B. EXAMPLE INFORMATION BUFFET TITLES

Other birth control is readily available; thus, abortion shouldn't be a form of birth control.
Women who have abortions (and sometimes the father of the child) may suffer major psychological damage.
The abortion decision is often made by minors or young adults, who don't have the maturity and life experiences to make good decisions.
Abortion eliminates the legal rights of the unborn child.
Abortion exposes women to various health risks and the danger of losing fertility.
Abortion is against doctors' Hippocratic Oath to “do no harm”.
The government should not control what a woman does with her body.
"Back alley" abortions could increase if it were made illegal, leading to increased risk of young women dying or becoming sterile.
It's arguably better for society to have babies aborted than have them be brought up poor and neglected, where not only will the child suffer but society when that child develops a higher attraction to crime, welfare, etc.
Not allowing abortion can cause one brief mistake can take away a woman's childhood and trap her for life.
Giving up a child for adoption can be just as emotionally damaging as having an abortion, so abortion should be an option.
Abortion is not murder because it is performed before a fetus has developed into a human person.

APPENDIX C. OBJECTIVE POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE MEASURE

What job or political office does Joe Biden currently hold?

- ❍ Vice President
- ❍ Attorney General
- ❍ Chief Justice
- ❍ Secretary of State

What job or political office does John Roberts currently hold?

- ❍ Chief Justice
- ❍ Vice President
- ❍ Attorney General
- ❍ Secretary of State

What job or political office does David Cameron currently hold?

- ❍ Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- ❍ Secretary-General of the United Nations
- ❍ Director of the International Monetary Fund
- ❍ President of the European Union

What job or political office does John Boehner currently hold?

- ❍ Speaker of the House
- ❍ President pro tempore of the Senate
- ❍ Senate Majority Leader
- ❍ House Majority Leader

Which political party currently has the most members in the Senate?

- ❍ Democratic
- ❍ Equally Democratic and Republican
- ❍ Republican

Which political party currently has the most members in the House of Representatives?

- ❍ Democratic
- ❍ Equally Democratic and Republican
- ❍ Republican

How long is the term of office for a U.S. Senator?

- ❍ 1 year
- ❍ 2 years
- ❍ 4 years
- ❍ 6 years

Whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the Federal Courts?

- ❍ President
- ❍ House of Representatives
- ❍ Senate
- ❍ Supreme Court

APPENDIX D. TABLES

Table D1. Selective exposure (SE), political attitudes, and political extremity as a function of flags condition for Study 1

Measure	**No Flags**	**Flags**	**Overall**
Abortion SE	81.1 (33.1)	84.7 (28.2)	82.9 (30.7)
Social Security SE	65.0 (41.3)	79.1 (31.6)*	71.5 (37.7)
Immigration SE	66.4 (40.9)	69.7 (37.1)	68.0 (39.0)
Average SE	70.6 (27.8)	78.5 (21.5)*	74.4 (25.2)
Political Attitudes	3.35 (1.28)	3.37 (1.10)	3.36 (1.19)
Attitude Extremity	1.93 (0.47)	1.82 (0.51)	1.88 (0.49)
Ideological Extremity	2.66 (1.36)	2.69 (1.23)	2.68 (1.29)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations)

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

Table D2. Political evaluations, voting intentions, and individual differences as a function of flags condition for Study 1

Measure	No Flags	Flags	Overall
Presidential Approval	59.0 (28.3)	55.4 (30.7)	57.2 (29.5)
Senate Approval	32.1 (20.4)	33.5 (24.8)	32.8 (22.6)
House Approval	29.4 (21.4)	32.9 (24.1)	31.1 (22.8)
Likelihood of Obama vote	62.7 (41.8)	62.9 (41.1)	62.8 (41.3)
Likelihood of Romney vote	23.6 (35.2)	16.9 (30.1)	20.3 (32.8)
Percent Obama vote	60%	62%	61%
Percent Romney vote	20%	13%	16%
Political knowledge	4.72 (1.33)	4.43 (1.57)	4.58 (1.46)
Close-mindedness	23.8 (4.48)	23.6 (5.74)	23.7 (5.11)
System Justification	44.3 (11.7)	44.0 (11.2)	44.2 (11.4)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations), except when measure is labeled as a percent

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

.

Table D3. Selective exposure, political attitudes, and political extremity as a function of flags condition and awareness for Study 1

	Not Aware		Aware	
Measure	**No Flags**	**Flags**	**No Flags**	**Flags**
Abortion SE	81.0 (34.7)	86.6 (25.4)	81.2 (31.4)	82.1 (31.8)
Social Security SE	66.1 (40.7)	82.7 (29.1)	63.4 (42.8)	74.8 (34.4)
Immigration SE	65.8 (42.7)	78.6 (32.9)	67.2 (39.4)	59.4 (39.5)
Average SE	70.9 (27.6)	83.4 (20.8)*	70.3 (28.3)	72.2 (21.1)
Political Attitudes	3.32 (1.22)	3.20 (1.13)	3.38 (1.37)	3.60 (1.02)
Attitude Extremity	1.91 (0.46)	1.84 (0.53)	1.95 (0.48)	1.80 (0.50)
Ideological Extremity	2.75 (1.33)	2.78 (1.26)	2.56 (1.40)	2.58 (1.20)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations)

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

Table D4. Selective exposure, political attitudes, and political extremity as a function of flag affiliation for Study 1

	No Republican-Flag Affiliation		Republican-Flag Affiliation	
Measure	**No Flags**	**Flags**	**No Flags**	**Flags**
Abortion SE	87.5 (25.9)	87.0 (28.3)	78.5 (35.4)	83.2 (28.3)
Social Security SE	79.4 (36.1)	76.4 (38.2)	60.8 (42.2)	80.9 (27.1)*
Immigration SE	58.8 (46.7)	67.7 (38.9)	68.4 (39.1)	71.0 (36.3)
Average SE	74.4 (26.2)	77.3 (24.8)	69.2 (28.7)	79.3 (19.2)*
Political Attitudes	3.81 (1.01)	3.27 (0.71)*	3.11 (1.29)	3.44 (1.30)
Attitude Extremity	1.73 (0.49)	1.72 (0.53)	2.00 (0.44)	1.90 (0.49)
Ideological Extremity	2.30 (1.26)	2.69 (1.31)	2.81 (1.38)	2.70 (1.19)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations)

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

Table D5. Scores, reaction times, and extremity as a function of flags condition for Study 2

Measure	No Flags	Flags	Overall
NFCC Score	55.1 (9.49)	56.5 (9.47)	55.8 (9.45)
NFCC RT	6.03 (1.68)	5.76 (1.62)	5.90 (1.65)
Nationalism Score	22.74 (4.47)	23.72 (5.32)	23.2 (4.92)
Nationalism RT	8.13 (1.84)	7.79 (1.60)	7.95 (1.72)
Patriotism Score	46.8 (6.42)	45.7 (6.54)	46.2 (6.47)
Patriotism RT	6.04 (1.98)	5.76 (1.16)	5.90 (1.61)
SCC Score	43.6 (11.7)	43.9 (10.1)	43.7 (10.82)
SCC RT	6.00 (1.52)	5.81 (1.35)	5.90 (1.43)
Party Extremity	2.45 (1.50)	2.60 (1.37)	2.53 (1.43)
Ideological Extremity	2.45 (1.31)	2.28 (1.26)	2.36 (1.28)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations)

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

Table D6. Scores, reaction times, and extremity as a function of flags condition and awareness for Study 2

	Not Aware		Aware	
Measure	**No Flags**	**Flags**	**No Flags**	**Flags**
NFCC Score	55.2 (11.0)	56.1 (9.4)	54.9 (5.9)	56.8 (9.7)
NFCC RT	6.10 (1.47)	5.10 (1.34)+	5.90 (2.09)	6.24 (1.66)
Nationalism Score	22.9 (4.3)	23.3 (4.6)	22.4 (5.0)	24.0 (5.9)
Nationalism RT	8.03 (1.59)	7.35 (1.51)*	8.31 (2.30)	8.10 (1.61)
Patriotism Score	46.1 (6.0)	45.4 (6.4)	48.1 (7.2)	45.8 (6.8)
Patriotism RT	5.87 (1.28)	5.43 (0.81)	6.39 (2.95)	5.99 (1.33)
SCC Score	43.6 (12.1)	46.3 (7.5)	43.6 (11.2)	42.1 (11.4)
SCC RT	5.95 (1.31)	5.29 (1.10)+	6.11 (1.92)	6.19 (1.40)
Party Extremity	2.25 (1.40)	2.56 (1.50)	2.86 (1.66)	2.64 (1.29)
Ideological Extremity	2.29 (1.24)	2.56 (1.54)	2.79 (1.42)	2.08 (1.00)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations)

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

+ indicates marginal difference ($p < .10$) between no flags and flags conditions

Table D7. Selective exposure, political attitudes, extremity, and knowledge by flags condition and information type for Study 3

	Political Information		Artwork Information	
Measure	**No Flags**	**Flags**	**No Flags**	**Flags**
Abortion/Painting SE	75.1 (36.2)	83.1 (29.1)	80.9 (31.4)	79.9 (32.9)
Same Sex Marriage/Sculpture SE	78.4 (34.8)	82.9 (33.7)	78.1 (33.7)	83.7 (30.6)
Social Security/Photograph SE	71.7 (35.7)	72.4 (37.4)	79.1 (32.8)	80.4 (32.9)
Average SE	75.0 (26.4)	79.5 (23.0)	79.4 (23.5)	81.3 (24.1)
Political Attitudes	3.57 (1.25)	3.37 (1.13)	3.43 (1.24)	3.45 (1.08)
Attitude Extremity	1.86 (0.57)	1.91 (0.53)	1.85 (0.61)	1.86 (0.53)
Party Extremity	2.75 (1.58)	2.85 (1.54)	2.71 (1.48)	2.58 (1.46)
Ideological Extremity	2.76 (1.57)	2.92 (1.48)	2.77 (1.39)	2.72 (1.41)
Political News Exposure	5.56 (2.61)	5.69 (2.77)	5.62 (2.86)	6.04 (2.51)
Political Knowledge	5.76 (1.83)	5.14 (2.08)*	5.78 (1.91)	5.82 (1.93)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations)

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

Table D8. Selective exposure based on continuous measures as a function of flags condition for Study 3

Measure	**No Flags**	**Flags**
Abortion SE	81.3 (32.8)	86.3 (26.1)
Same Sex Marriage SE	77.7 (35.2)	85.3 (30.9)
Social Security SE	71.0 (35.0)	73.9 (36.1)
Average Political SE	75.8 (27.3)	82.5 (23.6)*
Painting SE	77.6 (35.3)	83.2 (30.8)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations)

* indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) between no flags and flags conditions

Table D9. Perceptions of News Sources for Study 4

Measure	Fox News	CNN	MSNBC
Familiarity	5.60 (1.44) $_{a}$	5.64 (1.41) $_{b}$	5.29 (1.47) $_{a,b}$
Credibility	4.05 (1.71) $_{a,b}$	5.10 (1.40) $_{a,c}$	4.88 (1.16) $_{b,c}$
Ideology	1.05 (1.60) $_{a,b}$	-0.01 (1.28) $_{a,c}$	-0.35 (1.21) $_{b,c}$
Bias	1.35 (1.33) $_{a,b}$	0.62 (1.19) $_{a}$	0.63 (1.15) $_{b}$
Like	3.69 (1.49) $_{a,b}$	4.34 (1.08) $_{a}$	4.37 (0.92) $_{b}$
Exposure	0.83 (1.43)	1.08 (1.41)	0.92 (1.46)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations). Sources that share a subscript indicate significant differences ($p < .05$) for a given measure.

Table D10. Selective Exposure, political attitudes, extremity, and familiarity with news sources as a function of news source condition for Study 4

Measure	Fox News	CNN	MSNBC
Abortion SE	57.3 (35.8) $_a$	75.2 (32.8) $_a$	68.6 (36.1)
Same Sex Marriage SE	65.7 (38.7)	74.3 (35.8)	76.8 (31.9)
Social Security SE	49.1 (40.4)	47.7 (42.7)	41.4 (39.2)
Average SE	57.4 (19.1)	65.6 (23.2)	65.6 (25.0)
Political Attitudes	3.56 (0.70)	3.53 (0.67)	3.72 (0.94)
Attitude Extremity	1.48 (0.47)	1.50 (0.57)	1.55 (0.53)
Party Extremity	1.04 (0.90)	0.81 (0.86) $_a$	1.22 (1.06) $_a$
Ideological Extremity	0.92 (0.81)	1.02 (0.87)	1.02 (0.95)
News Prime Familiarity	5.43 (1.59)	5.44 (1.50)	5.34 (1.51)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations). Sources that share a subscript indicate significant differences ($p < .05$) for a given measure.

Table D11. Selective exposure as a function of political issue and when political issue was presented for Study 4

	1st	2nd	3rd
Abortion	61.0 (35.8)	69.7 (33.1)	70.3 (37.3)
Same Sex Marriage	62.2 (40.0) $_{a}$	79.0 (31.9) $_{a}$	75.4 (33.1)
Social Security	33.7 (35.8) $_{a,b}$	54.2 (43.1) $_{a}$	60.1 (38.5) $_{b}$

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations). Sources that share a subscript indicate significant differences ($p < .05$) for a given measure.

Table D12. Selective exposure based on political issue presentation order as a function of news source condition for Study 4

Measure	**Fox News**	**CNN**	**MSNBC**
First Political Issue	48.1 (39.6)	55.4 (40.8)	53.6 (37.9)
Second Political Issue	62.2 (37.8)	69.5 (38.0)	71.3 (37.1)
Third Political Issue	61.8 (37.8)	72.0 (37.7)	72.1 (34.2)
"Abridged"	62.0 (23.2)	70.8 (28.3)	71.7 (28.3)

Note: Values represent means (standard deviations). Sources that share a subscript indicate significant differences ($p < .05$) for a given measure.

APPENDIX E. FIGURES

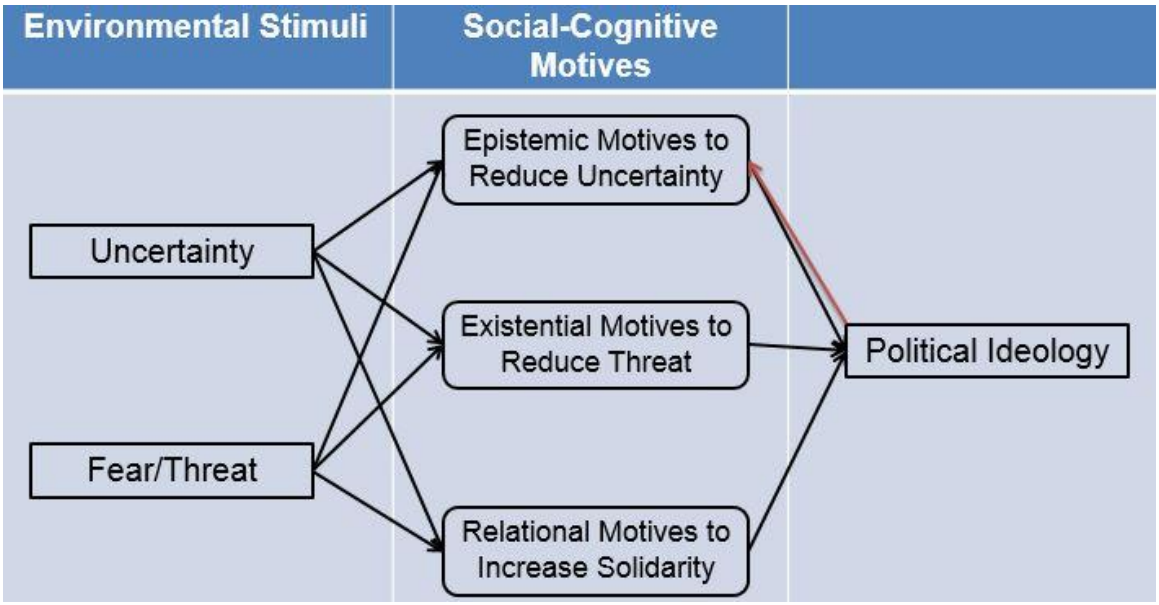
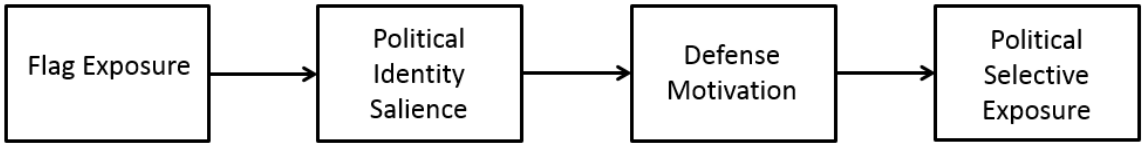
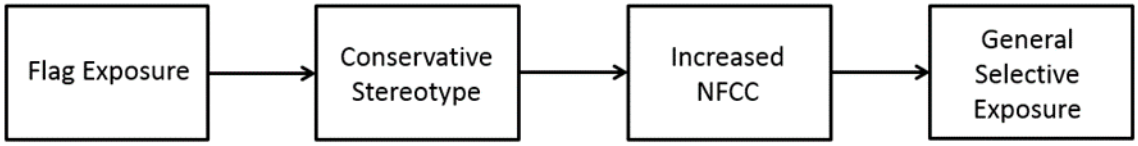


Figure E1. Motivated-social-cognition model of political conservatism. The red arrow represents the key hypothesis being addressed in this project.

Social Identity Account



Stereotype Priming Account



Active Self-Concept Account

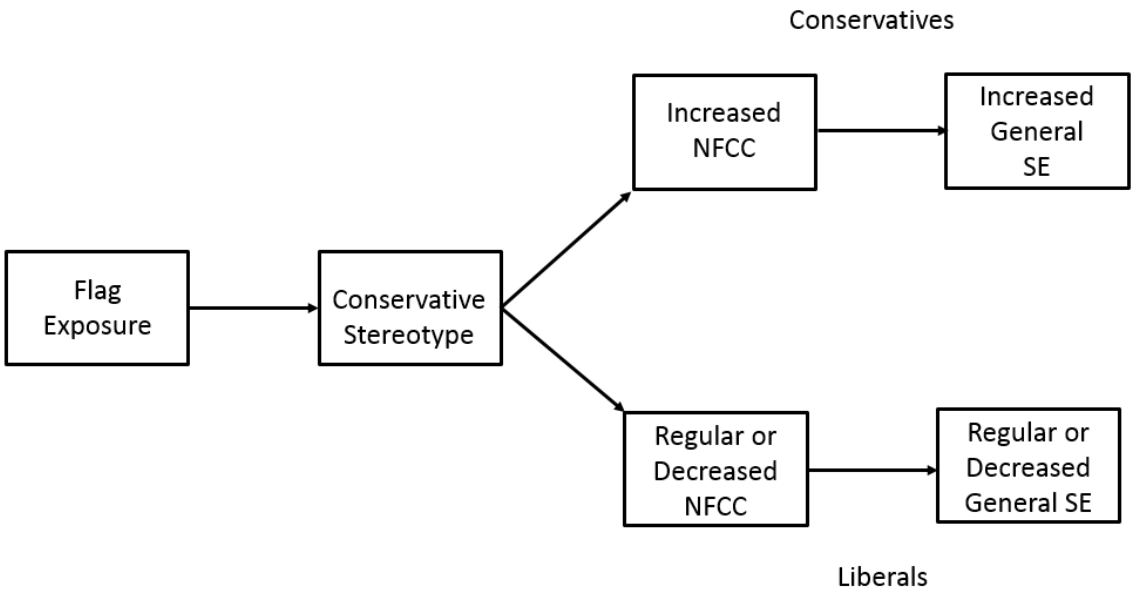


Figure E2. Social identity, stereotype priming, and active self-concept accounts.

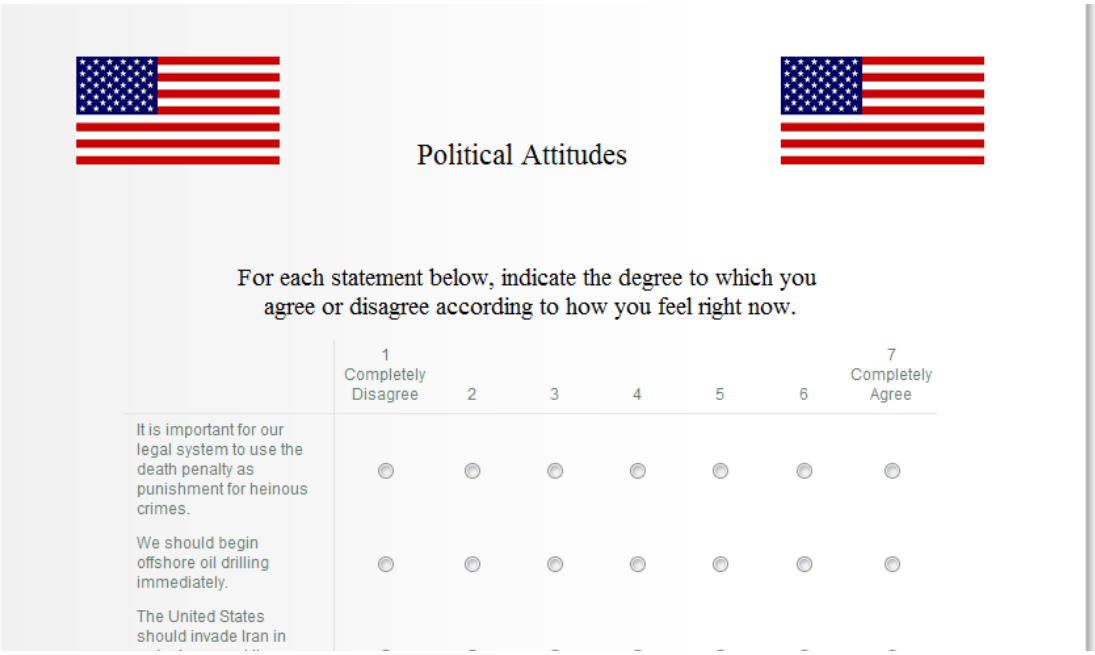


Figure E3. Partial screenshot that includes the header that appeared on the top of the page for the flags condition in Study 1.

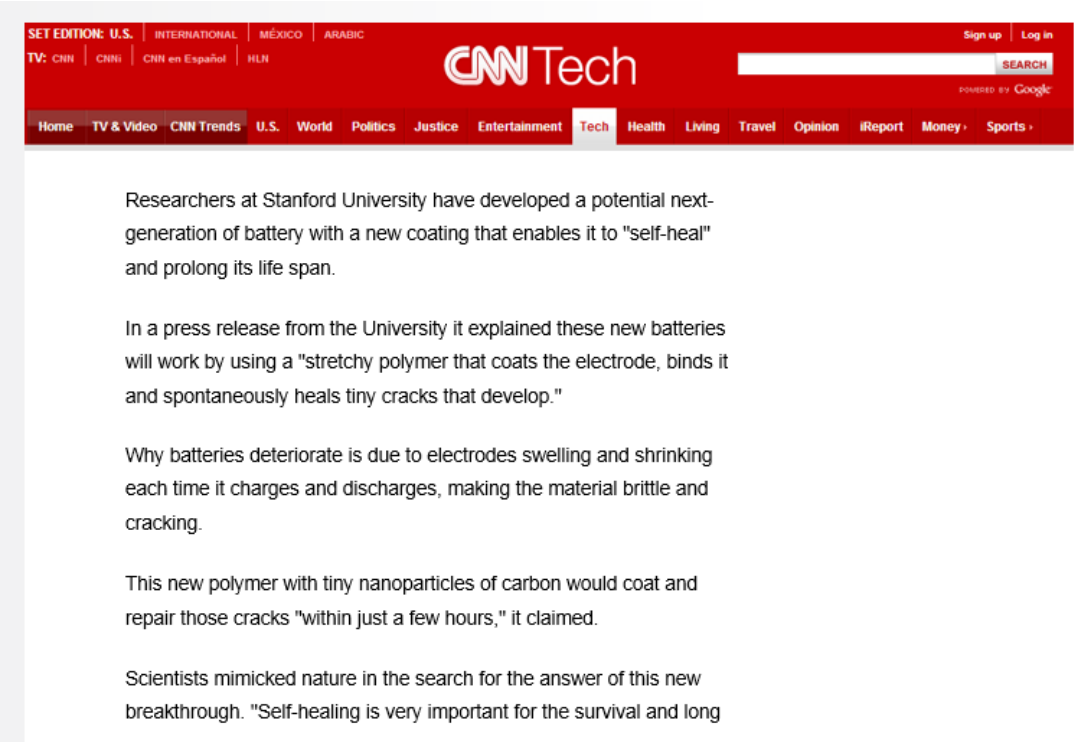


Figure E4. Partial screenshot that includes the news article with the CNN header that appeared at the beginning of Study 4.

REFERENCES

Allport, G. W., Vernon, P. E., & Lindzey, G. (1960). *Study of values.* Oxford, England: Houghton Mifflin.

Altemeyer, B. (1996). *The authoritarian specter.* Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press.

Ask, K., & Granhag, P. A. (2005). Motivational sources of confirmation bias in criminal investigations: The need for cognitive closure. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling, 2,* 43–63. doi:10.1002/jip.19

Becker, J. C., Enders-Comberg, A., Wagner, U., Christ, O., & Butz, D. A. (2012). Beware of national symbols: How flags can threaten intergroup relations. *Social Psychology, 43,* 3–6. doi:10.1027/1864-9335/a000073

Berger, J., Meredith, M., & Wheeler, S. C. (2008). Contextual priming: Where people vote affects how they vote. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 105,* 8846–8849. doi:10.1073/pnas.0711988105

Bishop, B. (2008). *The big sort: Why the clustering of like-minded America is tearing us apart.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Bonanno, G. A., & Jost, J. T. (2006). Conservative shift among high-exposure survivors of the September 11th terrorist attacks. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 28,* 311–323. doi:10.1207/s15324834basp2804_4

Bryan, C. J., Dweck, C. S., Ross, L., Kay, A. C., & Mislavsky, N. O. (2009). Political mindset: Effects of schema priming on liberal-conservative political positions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45,* 890–895. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.04.007

Buhrmester, M., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S. D. (2011). Amazon's Mechanical Turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality, data? *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 6,* 3–5. doi:10.1177/1745691610393980

Butz, D. A. (2009). National symbols as agents of psychological and social change. *Political Psychology, 30,* 779–804. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00725.x

Butz, D. A., Plant, E. A., & Doerr, C. E. (2007). Liberty and justice for all? Implications of exposure to the U.S. flag for intergroup relations. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, 33,* 396–408. doi:10.1177/0146167206296299

Byrne, D. (1964). Repression-sensitization. In B. A. Maher (Ed.), *Progress in experimental personality research* (Vol. 1, pp. 169–220). New York: Academic Press.

Cameron, J. A., & Trope, Y. (2004). Stereotype-biased search and processing of information about group members. *Social Cognition*, *22*, 650–672. doi:10.1521/soco.22.6.650.54818

Campbell, J. D., Trapnell, P. D., Heine, S. J., Katz, I. M., Lavallee, L. F., & Lehman, D. R. (1996). Self-concept clarity: Measurement, personality correlates, and cultural boundaries. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *70*, 141–156. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.70.1.141

Carney, D. R., Jost, J. T., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2008). The secret lives of liberals and conservatives: Personality profiles, interaction styles, and the things they leave behind. *Political Psychology*, *29*, 807–840. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2008.00668.x

Carter, T. J., Ferguson, M. J., & Hassin, R. R. (2011a). A single exposure to the American flag shifts support toward Republicanism up to 8 months later. *Psychological Science*, *22*, 1011–1018. doi:10.1177/0956797611414726

Carter, T. J., Ferguson, M. J., & Hassin, R. R. (2011b). Implicit nationalism as system justification: The case of the United States of America. *Social Cognition*, *29*, 341–359. doi:10.1521/soco.2011.29.3.341

Cesario, J., Plaks, J. E., & Higgins, E. T. (2006). Automatic social behavior as motivated preparation to interact. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*, 893–910. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.90.6.893

Chambers, J. R., Baron, R. S., & Inman, M. L. (2006). Misperceptions in intergroup conflict. Disagreeing about what we disagree about. *Psychological Science*, *17*, 38–45. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2005.01662.x

Chambers, J. R., & Melnyk, D. (2006). Why do I hate thee? Conflict misperceptions and intergroup mistrust. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *32*, 1295–1311. doi:10.1177/0146167206289979

Chambers, J. R., Schlenker, B. R., & Collisson, B. (2013). Ideology and prejudice: The role of value conflicts. *Psychological Science*, *24*, 140–149. doi:10.1177/0956797612447820

Converse, P. E. (1964). The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In D. Apter (Ed.), *Ideology and discontent* (pp. 206–261). New York: Free Press.

Converse, P. E. (2000). Assessing the capacity of mass electorates. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *3*, 331–353.

DeMarree, K. G., Petty, R. E., & Strunk, D. R. (2010). Self-esteem accessibility as attitude strength: On the durability and impactfulness of accessible self-esteem. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *36*, 628–641. doi:10.1177/0146167210364851

DeMarree, K. G., Wheeler, S. C., & Petty, R. E. (2005). Priming a new identity: Self-monitoring moderates the effects of nonself primes on self-judgments and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *89*, 657–671. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.89.5.657

Dijksterhuis, A., & Bargh, J. A. (2001). The perception–behavior expressway: Automatic effects of social perception on social behavior. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 33, pp. 1–40). San Diego, CA, US: Academic Press.

Dijksterhuis, A., Spears, R., Postmes, T., Stapel, D., Koomen, W., van Knippenberg, A., & Scheepers, D. (1998). Seeing one thing and doing another: Contrast effects in automatic behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *75*, 862–871. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.75.4.862

Druckman, J. N., Fein, J., & Leeper, T. J. (2012). A source of bias in public opinion stability. *American Political Science Review*, *106*, 430–454. doi:10.1017/S0003055412000123

Erikson, R. S., & Tedin, K. L. (2003). *American public opinion.* (6th ed.). New York: Longman.

Federico, C. M., Golec, A., & Dial, J. L. (2005). The relationship between the need for closure and support for military action against Iraq: Moderating effects of national attachment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *31*, 621–632. doi:10.1177/0146167204271588

Feldman, S. (1988). Structure and consistency in public opinion: The role of core beliefs and values. *American Journal of Political Science*, *32*, 416–440.

Feldman, S. (2003). Values, ideology, and structure of political attitudes. In D. O. Sears, L. Huddy, & R. Jervis (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political psychology* (pp. 477–508). New York: Oxford University Press.

Ferguson, M. J., & Hassin, R. R. (2007). On the automatic association between America and aggression for news watchers. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *33*, 1632–1647. doi:10.1177/0146167207307493

Fischer, P. (2011). Selective exposure, decision uncertainty, and cognitive economy: A new theoretical perspective on confirmatory information search. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *5*, 751–762. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2011.00386.x

Fischer, P., Fischer, J., Weisweiler, S., & Frey, D. (2010). Selective exposure to information: How different modes of decision making affect subsequent confirmatory information processing. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, *49*, 871–881. doi:10.1348/014466610X499668

Fischer, P., Jonas, E., Frey, D., & Kastenmüller, A. (2008). Selective exposure and decision framing: The impact of gain and loss framing on confirmatory information search after decisions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *44*, 312–320. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2007.06.001

Fischer, P., Kastenmüller, A., Greitemeyer, T., Fischer, J., Frey, D., & Crelley, D. (2011). Threat and selective exposure: The moderating role of threat and decision context on confirmatory information search after decisions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *140*, 51–62. doi:10.1037/a0021595

Friedersdorf, C. (2012). How conservative media lost to the MSM and failed the rank and file. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved January 12, 2013, from http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/11/how-conservative-media-lost-to-the-msm-and-failed-the-rank-and-file/264855/

Gawronski, B., Bodenhausen, G. V., & Becker, A. P. (2007). I like it, because I like myself: Associative self-anchoring and post-decisional change of implicit evaluations. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *43*, 221–232. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2006.04.001

Goren, A., Federico, C. M., & Kittelson, M. C. (2009). Source cues, partisan identities, and political value expression. *American Journal of Political Science*, *53*, 805–820.

Graham, J., Nosek, B. A., & Haidt, J. (2012). The moral stereotypes of liberals and conservatives: Exaggeration of differences across the political spectrum. *PLoS ONE*, *7*, e50092. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0050092

Greenberg, J., & Jonas, E. (2003). Psychological and political orientation-The left, the right, and the rigid: Comment on Jost et al. (2003). *Psychological Bulletin*, *129*, 376–382. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.376

Hager, M., Hagemann, D., Danner, D., & Schankin, A. (2012). Assessing aesthetic appreciation of visual artworks—The construction of the Art Reception Survey (ARS). *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, *6*, 320–333. doi:10.1037/a0028776

Hart, W., Adams, J. M., Alex Burton, K., Shreves, W., & Hamilton, J. C. (2012). Shaping reality vs. hiding from reality: Reconsidering the effects of trait need for closure on information search. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *46*, 489–496. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2012.05.004

Hart, W., Albarracín, D., Eagly, A. H., Brechan, I., Lindberg, M. J., & Merrill, L. (2009). Feeling validated versus being correct: A meta-analysis of selective exposure to information. *Psychological Bulletin*, *135*, 555–588. doi:10.1037/a0015701

Hassin, R. R., Ferguson, M. J., Kardosh, R., Porter, S. C., Carter, T. J., & Dudareva, V. (2009). Précis of implicit nationalism. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1167*, 135–145. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009.04734.x

Hassin, R. R., Ferguson, M. J., Shidlovski, D., & Gross, T. (2007). Subliminal exposure to national flags affects political thought and behavior. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *104*, 19757–19761. doi:10.1073/pnas.0704679104

Huddy, L., & Feldman, S. (2011). Americans respond politically to 9/11: Understanding the impact of the terrorist attacks and their aftermath. *The American Psychologist*, *66*, 455–467. doi:10.1037/a0024894

Jacoby, W. (1991). Ideological identification and issue attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science*, *35*, 178–205.

John, L. K., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2012). Measuring the prevalence of questionable research practices with incentives for truth telling. *Psychological Science*, *23*, 524–532. doi:10.1177/0956797611430953

Jost, J. T., & Amodio, D. M. (2012). Political ideology as motivated social cognition: Behavioral and neuroscientific evidence. *Motivation and Emotion*, *36*, 55–64. doi:10.1007/s11031-011-9260-7

Jost, J. T., Federico, C. M., & Napier, J. L. (2009). Political ideology: Its structure, functions, and elective affinities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *60*, 307–337. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163600

Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003a). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, *129*, 339–375. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.339

Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003b). Exceptions that prove the rule-Using a theory of motivated social cognition to account for ideological incongruities and political anomalies: Reply to Greenberg and Jonas (2003). *Psychological Bulletin*, *129*, 383–393. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.383

Jost, J. T., Napier, J. L., Thorisdottir, H., Gosling, S. D., Palfai, T. P., & Ostafin, B. (2007). Are needs to manage uncertainty and threat associated with political conservatism or ideological extremity? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33*, 989–1007. doi:10.1177/0146167207301028

Jost, J. T., Nosek, B. A., & Gosling, S. D. (2008). Ideology: Its resurgence in social, personality, and political psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3*, 126–136. doi:10.1111/j.1745-6916.2008.00070.x

Judd, C. M., & Park, B. (2005). Group differences and stereotype accuracy. In J. F. Dovidio, P. Glick, & L. A. Rudman (Eds.), *Prejudice: Fifty years after Allport* (pp. 123–138). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Kahneman, D. (2012). A proposal to deal with questions about priming effects. Retrieved February 02, 2014, from http://www.nature.com/polopoly_fs/7.6716.1349271308!/suppinfoFile/Kahneman Letter.pdf

Karlsson, N., Loewenstein, G., & Seppi, D. (2009). The ostrich effect: Selective attention to information. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, 38*, 95–115. doi:10.1007/s11166-009-9060-6

Kastenmüller, A., Fischer, P., Jonas, E., Greitemeyer, T., Frey, D., Koppl, J., & Aydin, N. (2010). Selective exposure : The impact of framing information search instructions as gains and losses. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 846*, 837–846. doi:10.1002/ejsp

Kay, A. C., & Jost, J. T. (2003). Complementary justice: Effects of "poor but happy" and "poor but honest" stereotype exemplars on system justification and implicit activation of the justice motive. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*, 823–837. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.823

Kemmelmeier, M., & Winter, D. G. (2008). Sowing patriotism, but reaping nationalism? Consequences of exposure to the American flag. *Political Psychology, 29*, 859–879. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2008.00670.x

Kinder, D. R. (1998). Opinion and action in the realm of politics. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (pp. 778–867). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Knutson, O. (1995). Left-right materialist value orientations. In J. W. van Deth & E. Scarbrough (Eds.), *The impact of values* (pp. 160–196). New York: Oxford University Press.

Kostopoulou, O., Mousoulis, C., & Delaney, B. (2009). Information search and information distortion in the diagnosis of an ambiguous presentation. *Judgment and Decision Making*, *4*, 408–418.

Kray, L. J., & Galinsky, A. D. (2003). The debiasing effect of counterfactual mind-sets: Increasing the search for disconfirmatory information in group decisions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *91*, 69–81. doi:10.1016/S0749-5978(02)00534-4

Kruglanski, A. W., & Webster, D. M. (1996). Motivated closing of the mind: "Seizing" and "freezing." *Psychological Review*, *103*, 263–283. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.103.2.263

LaBouff, J. P., Rowatt, W. C., Johnson, M. K., & Finkle, C. (2012). Differences in attitudes toward outgroups in religious and nonreligious contexts in a multinational sample: A situational context priming study. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, *22*, 1–9. doi:10.1080/10508619.2012.634778

Landau, M. J., Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., Cohen, F., Pyszczynski, T., Arndt, J., … Cook, A. (2004). Deliver us from evil: The effects of mortality salience and reminders of 9/11 on support for President George W. Bush. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *30*, 1136–1150. doi:10.1177/0146167204267988

Lavine, H., Lodge, M., & Freitas, K. (2005). Threat, authoritarianism, and selective exposure to information. *Political Psychology*, *26*, 219–244. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2005.00416.x

Layman, G. C., & Carsey, T. M. (2002). Party polarization and "conflict extension" in the American electorate. *American Journal of Political Science*, *46*, 786–802.

Lombardi, W. J., Higgins, E. T., & Bargh, J. A. (1987). The role of consciousness in priming effects on categorization: Assimilation versus contrast as a function of awareness of the priming task. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *13*, 411–429. doi:10.1177/0146167287133009

Martin, L. L., Seta, J. J., & Crelia, R. A. (1990). Assimilation and contrast as a function of people's willingness and ability to expend effort in forming an impression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *59*, 27–37. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.59.1.27

McCoy, S. K., & Major, B. (2007). Priming meritocracy and the psychological justification of inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *43*, 341–351. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2006.04.009

Mendel, R., Traut-Mattausch, E., Jonas, E., Leucht, S., Kane, J. M., Maino, K., … Hamann, J. (2011). Confirmation bias: Why psychiatrists stick to wrong preliminary diagnoses. *Psychological Medicine, 41*, 2651–2659. doi:10.1017/S0033291711000808

Merritt, A. C., Effron, D. A., & Monin, B. (2010). Moral self-licensing: When being good frees us to be bad. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *4*, 344–357. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2010.00263.x

Mussweiler, T., Rüter, K., & Epstude, K. (2004). The ups and downs of social comparison: Mechanisms of assimilation and contrast. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *87*, 832–44. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.87.6.832

Nail, P. R., McGregor, I., Drinkwater, A. E., Steele, G. M., & Thompson, A. W. (2009). Threat causes liberals to think like conservatives. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *45*, 901–907. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.04.013

Nordgren, L. F., & Dijksterhuis, A. (2009). The devil is in the deliberation: Thinking too much reduces preference consistency. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *36*, 39–46. doi:10.1086/596306

Paolacci, G., Chandler, J., & Ipeirotis, P. G. (2010). Running experiments on Amazon Mechanical Turk. *Judgment and Decision Making*, *5*, 411–419.

Ratcliff, R. (1993). Methods for dealing with reaction time outliers. *Psychological Bulletin*, *114*, 510–532. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.114.3.510

Robinson, R. J., Keltner, D., Ward, A., & Ross, L. (1995). Actual versus assumed differences in construal: "Naive realism" in intergroup perception and conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *68*, 404–417. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.68.3.404

Roets, A., & Van Hiel, A. (2011). Item selection and validation of a brief, 15-item version of the Need for Closure Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *50*, 90–94. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2010.09.004

Rokeach, M. (1960). *The open and closed mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Rokeach, M. (1968). The role of values in public opinion research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *32*, 547–559. doi:10.1086/267645

Rutchick, A. M. (2010). Deus ex machina: The influence of polling place on voting behavior. *Political Psychology*, *31*, 209–225. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00749.x

Scherer. A.M. (2013a). [The impact of religious primes on selective exposure]. Unpublished raw data.

Scherer. A.M. (2013b). [The impact of meritocracy primes on selective exposure]. Unpublished raw data.

Scherer, A.M. Windschitl, P.D., & Graham, J. (2014). An ideological house of mirrors: Political stereotypes as exaggerations of motivated social cognition differences. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Scherer, A. M., Windschitl, P. D., O'Rourke, J., & Smith, A. R. (2012). Hoping for more: The influence of outcome desirability on information seeking and predictions about relative quantities. *Cognition, 125*, 113–117. doi:10.1016/j.cognition.2012.06.013

Scherer, A. M., Windschitl, P. D., & Smith, A. R. (2013). Hope to be right: Biased information seeking following arbitrary and informed predictions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 49,* 106–112. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2012.07.012

Shariff, A. F., & Norenzayan, A. (2007). God is watching you: Priming God concepts increases prosocial behavior in an anonymous economic game. *Psychological Science, 18,* 803–809. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01983.x

Sidanius, J. (1985). Cognitive functioning and sociopolitical ideology revisited. *Political Psychology, 6,* 637–661. doi:10.2307/3791021

Sidanius, J. (1988). Political sophistication and political deviance: A structural equation examination of context theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55,* 37–51. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.55.1.37

Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D., & Simonsohn, U. (2011). False-positive psychology: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant. *Psychological Science, 22*, 1359–1366. doi:10.1177/0956797611417632

Simonsohn, U., Nelson, L. D., & Simmons, J. P. (*in press*). P-Curve: A key to the file-drawer. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. doi:10.1037/a0033242

Skitka, L. J. (2005). Patriotism or nationalism? Understanding post-September 11, 2001, flag-display behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 35,* 1995–2011. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2005.tb02206.x

Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information, 13,* 65–93. doi:10.1177/053901847401300204

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Salt Lake City, UT: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Tetlock, P. E. (1984). Cognitive style and political belief systems in the British House of Commons. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *46*, 365–375. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.46.2.365

Tetlock, P. E. (1989). Structure and function in political belief systems. In A. R. Pratkanis, S. J. Breckler, & A. G. Greenwald (Eds.), *Attitude structure and function.* (pp. 129–151). Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Thórisdóttir, H., & Jost, J. T. (2011). Motivated closed-mindedness mediates the effect of threat on political conservatism. *Political Psychology*, *32*, 785–811. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00840.x

Thorisdottir, H., Jost, J. T., Liviatan, I., & Shrout, P. E. (2007). Psychological needs and values underlying left-right political orientation: Cross-national evidence from Eastern and Western Europe. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *71*, 175–203. doi:10.1093/poq/nfm008

Turner, J. C. (1975). Social comparison and social identity: Some prospects for intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *5*, 1–34. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2420050102

Ullrich, J., & Cohrs, J. C. (2007). Terrorism salience increases system justification: Experimental evidence. *Social Justice Research*, *20*, 117–139. doi:10.1007/s11211-007-0035-y

Van Hiel, A., & Mervielde, I. (2003). The measurement of cognitive complexity and its relationship with political extremism. *Political Psychology*, *24*, 781–801. doi:10.1046/j.1467-9221.2003.00354.x

Wakslak, C. J., Jost, J. T., & Bauer, P. (2011). Spreading rationalization: Increased support for large-scale and small-scale social systems following system threat. *Social Cognition*, *29*, 288–302. doi:10.1521/soco.2011.29.3.288

Webster, D. M., & Kruglanski, A. W. (1994). Individual differences in need for cognitive closure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*, 1049–1062. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.67.6.1049

Wegener, D. T., & Petty, R. E. (1995). Flexible correction processes in social judgment: The role of naive theories in corrections for perceived bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *68*, 36–51. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.68.1.36

Wheeler, S. C., & DeMarree, K. G. (2009). Multiple mechanisms of prime-to-behavior effects. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *3*, 566–581. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2009.00187.x

Wheeler, S. C., Jarvis, W. B. G., & Petty, R. E. (2001). Think unto others: The self-destructive impact of negative racial stereotypes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *37*, 173–180. doi:10.1006/jesp.2000.1448

Windschitl, P. D., Scherer, A. M., Smith, A. R., & Rose, J. P. (2013). Why so confident? The influence of outcome desirability on selective exposure and likelihood judgment. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *120*, 73–86. doi:10.1016/j.obhdp.2012.10.002

Yong, E. (2013, November 26). Psychologists strike a blow for reproducibility. *Nature*. doi:10.1038/nature.2013.14232